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Academics' Perceptions of their Teaching Role following the Introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment

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Abstract

The aim of this phenomenologically-based study was to establish, from the perspective of academics, what impact the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment had had on teaching in higher education. Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) was introduced by the university funding councils, in response to their obligations under the *Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act* (1992) and was the methodology used to assess the quality of teaching in higher education in the UK during the period February 1993 to June 1995.

A semi-structured interview approach was chosen to generate the data. Forty-six academics from two departments (Computer Science and Business Studies) in four institutions (two pre-1992 and two post-1992 universities) were interviewed. Questions focused on academics' personal views, opinions and aspirations with respect to teaching. These were examined together with their perceptions of the institutional context particularly with respect to support for teaching, and incorporating their experiences of TQA.

Respondents expressed a high commitment to teaching, and a stronger professional than institutional loyalty. Teaching was very pressurised due to increasing student numbers, high student:staff ratios, demanding students and the requirements of external monitoring. Academics were also under pressure to excel at research, since status was based on research, rather than teaching excellence. These pressures had been exacerbated by the Government's funding, expansion, and customer-service policies, to which institutions had responded with increasingly bureaucratic and less collegial systems.

The academics felt that TQA did not benefit teaching and learning directly, but indirect benefits included promoting the improvement of administrative systems, and helping them to maintain standards. Participants also regarded the TQA methodology as inappropriate, and suggested that quality assurance systems should be audit-based and improvement-focused, with minimal external controls to assure the integrity of institutional self-regulatory mechanisms.

Universities in the study offered no rewards and career opportunities for, teaching excellence. Few of the academics had been trained for teaching and there were minimal appropriate initial training and continual professional development programmes. The academics believed that TQA would raise the profile of teaching and, thus, promote the recognition of teaching excellence. The primary benefit of TQA was, thus, the potential promotion of the professionalism of university teaching.

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Introduction

The aim of this research was to establish, from the perspective of academics, what impact the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment had had on teaching in higher education, particularly with respect to teaching quality and academic professionalism. Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) was the methodology used to assess the quality of teaching in UK higher education between February 1993 and June 1995.

Teaching in higher education in the UK came into prominence following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment in the *Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act* 1992. Incorporated in this Act was a statutory obligation for the funding councils to assess the quality of the education (teaching and learning) in the institutions whose activities they funded. TQA initially included direct observation and assessment of teaching performance, which was a concept alien particularly to the 'traditional' pre-1992 university sector of higher education. The new quality procedures, thus, gave rise to many discussions, including the 'Quality Debate' in the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) in 1993. A proliferation of books on the subject of 'quality' as it applied to higher education soon followed.

The 'Quality Debate' purported to reflect academics' views and opinions of TQA and its impact on their teaching. At the time, however, there appeared to be little, if any, systematic research undertaken into this. The purpose of this phenomenologically-oriented study, therefore, was to obtain academics' personal perceptions of their experience of teaching following the introduction of TQA, with a view to extracting the essential effects of TQA on teaching in higher education from their viewpoint. The study explored the academics' personal values and attitudes with regard to teaching, and included their perceptions of the institutional context particularly with respect to recognition of, and support for, teaching following the introduction of TQA. In addition, the study examined the academics' experiences of specific teaching quality assurance systems within their own institutions, their experience of the TQA process itself and their views as to its implications particularly with respect to teaching quality and academic professionalism.

(i) The Historical Development of Higher Education in the UK

A brief overview of the historical development of higher education in the UK leading up to the introduction of TQA enables the study to be put into context, both socially and politically. The English model of higher education has its origins in the medieval universities of Oxford and Cambridge. These remained the only universities in England (as distinct from Scotland) up to the nineteenth century. The medieval curricula remained largely intact until the Industrial Revolution, which started in the eighteenth century. Belatedly the universities redefined themselves to cater for the new industrial society. The modern university combining research as well as teaching began in Scotland and Germany. Each independently invented the single subject specialist professor. The Scottish model had a profound influence on the new English universities of the nineteenth century.

Student numbers increased during the nineteenth century all over Europe and women students were admitted for the first time. Higher education was still elitist until the twentieth century, however, when the increased intake included students from the lower classes. This reflected the changing social function of higher education in an industrial society.

The 1944 *Education Act* established the universal right to personal development through education, but it was not until the 1960s that equal educational opportunities began in earnest with the setting up of a comprehensive system of education for all, and the expansion of higher education. There had been gradual expansion following World War II in the UK as in every industrial society, but the Robbins Committee (1963) recommended major university expansion. This led to the foundation of new universities, the promotion of Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) to university status, and the establishment of the polytechnic sector of higher education following the institution of the 'binary line' by Anthony Crosland in 1964. The period since World War II has seen the greatest expansion of higher education involving much larger sections of the population and, as such, has been regarded as marking the

transition from elite to mass higher education. The university again was transformed into a pivotal institution of a new kind of society.

The oil crisis precipitated a recession in the 1970s and this gave rise to 'steering problems' for the state (Ranson 1990:6). The Thatcher Government which came into power in 1979 set about tackling the problem with a 'remorseless pursuit of 'efficiency'' (Russell 1993:6). Tory policy was effectively privatising what could be privatised and centralising the rest (i.e. interventionist policies) with Treasury supremacy over policy. Thatcher introduced drastic public sector reforms in order to contain public spending. In 1981/82 harsh cuts in public expenditure impinged very severely on universities, who suffered sharp cuts in recurrent grants. Two further cuts were imposed in 1984/85 and 1985/86. When cuts were made there was a search for productivity gains to forestall a decline in standards. Hence public sector efficiency, financial planning and value for money were the ruling obsessions (Jenkins 1996).

Towards the end of the decade the Conservative government's policies on consumer involvement and accountability were indicated clearly in the *Education Reform Act 1988*. This was regarded as a radical break with the past in terms of the basic power bases of the education system, and the political priorities that informed the 1944 *Education Act*. The 1988 Act included reforms in both management and funding of higher education, together with the monitoring of the quality of its work. It also indicated government's view that the overriding priority of higher education was the commitment to the economy, with rewards and penalties as appropriate. This was deeply offensive to universities since British tradition had stressed the autonomy of the universities and their freedom from State direction, despite being increasingly dependent on it for funding (Maclure 1992). Academic freedom, which had thrived on universities' loose links with the State, was also threatened increasingly by the 1988 Act. Critics argued that universities should be run on collegial not managerial principles.

Effectively Thatcherism continued after her demise in 1990, for despite a change of leadership style during John Major's term of office the approach to the public sector was unchanged from that of his mentor (Jenkins 1996). The *Citizens' Charter* (July

1991) indicated the Conservative government's view that individual citizens should have the right to obtain high quality public services, responsive to their needs and provided efficiently at low cost. The four main themes of the Charter were quality, choice, standards and value. The Charter was to be at the heart of government policy in the 1990s. These policies informed the White Paper *Higher Education; A New Framework* (May 1991), which preceded the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*. The White Paper, and subsequent legislation set out the government's definitions for various aspects of quality assurance in higher education. The Government also announced its intentions to remove the barriers between the academic and vocational streams of higher education, by abolishing the binary line. As a result, the 1992 Act enabled the polytechnics to call themselves universities.

The *Further and Higher Education Act* (*1992*) encompassed government policies towards containing public spending whilst at the same time achieving efficient expansion, meeting the needs of industry and commerce and maintaining the quality of higher education. The key to this, the government believed, lay in greater competition for funds and students. To assist this aim, the government introduced a single funding structure for teaching throughout higher education. For the first time, government identified specific arrangements for the various aspects of quality assurance in higher education, particularly with respect to teaching. It believed that the prime responsibility for quality assurance lay with the institutions, but that there was a need for proper accountability and proposed that students and employers required improved information about quality. The Act, thus, heralded the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and, consequently, discussions on the role and nature of university teaching.

The 1992 Act was passed whilst I was employed as an administrator in a School of Computing at a former polytechnic. At the time I was writing a dissertation on the applicability of Total Quality Management (TQM) to higher education as part of a Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) qualification. On completion of the DMS, I was interested in continuing studying the issue of 'quality' using my knowledge of TQM, but focusing on teaching quality following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment. The move to a pre-1992 university, where I originally applied to

study a taught Masters course, enabled me to undertake this research with a view to submitting my findings as a doctoral thesis.

(ii) Research Aims and Objectives

Initially the research was envisaged as being primarily literature-based and encompassing a study of Teaching Quality Assessment in relation to Total Quality Management principles. Study of the literature, together with my prior experience as a Lecturer in Business Studies in Further Education, however, led me to become increasingly interested in what academics at the chalk face really felt about teaching in higher education in general and the effect of TQA in particular. This change in emphasis resulted in a study that predominantly used primary data sources i.e. the academics themselves.

The main focus of the study was, thus, on the academics' perceptions of their experience of teaching in higher education following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment. Four main aspects to this were regarded as appropriate for the purposes of the study including:

- the academics' personal interest in, and experience of, teaching in higher education
- their perceptions of the institutional context in terms of value of and support for teaching
- specific procedures for assuring teaching quality in the institutions involved in the study
- the academics' experiences and perceptions of TQA particularly in terms of its potential effect on teaching quality and/or the environment for teaching in higher education.

The perceptions of academics would depend not only on their individual views and aspirations with respect to teaching, but would be influenced by the institutional context particularly with regard to its support for teaching. Institutions implement a range of quality assurance procedures but the main ones that influence teaching

quality are those which assure the quality of the academic staff. These were, therefore, explored together with the academics' experience of the TQA process itself. These four aspects formed the four main findings chapters in the study.

(iii) The Organisation of the Thesis

Overall, the study was structured into eight chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 provides a review of the literature, predominantly from the Robbins' expansion of UK higher education in the 1960s to the Dearing inquiry into higher education in 1997. This chapter begins with a review of Government policy and legislation with respect to higher education and examines this in relation to cultural aspects of higher education institutions, in order to gain an understanding of the external and internal contexts within which academics were working. Since the early 1980s Government policies were regarded as increasingly emphasising accountability for public funds and the strengthening of managerialist i.e. interventionist controls. These policies were at odds with the culture of the 'traditional' university and, in particular, were regarded as undermining academic professionalism and infringing professional autonomy. These aspects are, therefore, examined in some detail, together with related concepts such as peer review and collegiality.

The concept of 'quality' as it applies to teaching in higher education came into debate following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment. Section 1.5 is, thus, devoted to the examination of the meaning of quality in higher education including approaches to quality assurance with particular emphasis on the selection and development of academic staff, student feedback procedures and the external examiner system. The chapter concludes with an overview of selected sociological studies of higher education in order to gain insights into what research had already been undertaken and the methodology used.

A detailed description of the qualitative methodology used in the study is given in Chapter 2. The research was informed by the phenomenological tradition of inquiry, which involves the study of the phenomenon or concept from the perspective of the

individual, whilst the researcher adopts the role of disinterested observer. The development of the semi-structured interview schedule and the selection of the interview sample involved in the study, including the choice of subject disciplines, are discussed. Data management was facilitated by the use of Q.S.R. NUD*IST and preliminary stages in data analysis utilising this software e.g. coding are described. Data analysis involving data reduction and data display leading to interpretations and conclusions is explained in some detailed. Issues relating to reliability and validity, and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 3 is devoted to providing a profile of the academics participating in the study. The focus of the research project was on the academics' views and perceptions of their experience of teaching in higher education. Consequently, this first chapter of the findings of the research looks at who the interviewees were in terms of their status together with academic, teaching and/or professional qualifications, and experience both in higher education and also industry or commerce. Their reasons for entering academia and, consequently, teaching in higher education are also examined.

Following on from the more factual information on the respondents in the study, the chapter then looks more specifically at their opinions, perspectives and values with respect to certain aspects of teaching in higher education. Teaching Quality Assessment was based on a fitness-for-purpose approach. The academics were, therefore, asked what they believed the primary purposes of higher education to be. In addition academic posts, particularly in the pre-1992 sector, frequently incorporated a responsibility to undertake research. It was acknowledged that reputation within academia was defined in terms of research rather than teaching excellence. It was felt necessary, therefore, to ascertain whether each respondent felt more oriented towards teaching or research, and establish what issues arose from this which had implications on their teaching role. Related to the teaching/research orientation, the final section then examines the academics' primary academic loyalty in terms of the students, the discipline, the school/department or the institution.

Chapter 4 explores the institutional context in terms of status of, and support for, teaching in the institutions in the study. This exploration is achieved solely through

the eyes of the respondents, since it is their perceptions of the institutional context that impacts upon their teaching. The academics, thus, responded to questions such as did teaching have a high profile, and what policies had their institutions adopted to support teaching and promote teaching excellence. In particular they were asked whether research into teaching in their subject discipline was encouraged, what teaching initiatives were in operation and whether quality management systems implemented by their institution benefited teaching and learning.

Rewards and incentives for excellence in teaching are explored, particularly in terms of promotion criteria and promotion prospects. Issues relating to ownership, involvement and collaboration are also examined, so that a 'picture' of the culture and working environment with respect to teaching could be established.

Chapter 5 looks more closely at quality assurance systems and procedures for teaching in the institutions concerned, again through the eyes of the academics themselves. Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) was an external system designed to assess the quality of teaching, but the universities themselves were expected to control the quality of teaching and learning in their institution by means of internal quality assurance procedures. Institutionally, two main aspects are involved in assuring the quality of teaching in higher education, these being (a) assuring the quality of the teaching staff and (b) incorporating student feedback systems.

The first of these is explored through the experiences and perceptions of the respondents with reference to their institution's recruitment, support and development procedures. The significance and value of having a teaching qualification is considered. Mechanisms and procedures for obtaining student feedback and the perceived benefits and difficulties associated with this are also examined, and include examples of change precipitated by student feedback. In addition, the respondents' experiences of, and views on, accreditation and the external examiner system in terms of contributing to quality assurance, are briefly described.

Chapter 6 focuses on the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) process itself including an overview of the methodology and a brief discussion of the results of the procedure

which operated between February 1993 and June 1995. This provided the context for fully appreciating the responses of the academics. As TQA involved selective assessment visits, it was necessary first to establish what involvement, if any, the respondents had had in the process and/or what was their level of awareness of TQA.

The themes in this chapter primarily originated from the discussions in the 'Quality Debate' and include questions on the benefits and, conversely, criticisms of TQA and whether it increased a self-critical evaluation of teaching. Academics were also asked their views as to whether TQA (a) was regarded as infringing academic freedom and institutional autonomy, (b) encouraged a compliance culture and (c) undermined professionalism and self-respect. From the findings of this chapter a picture of how the academics viewed an external quality assessment procedure such as TQA could be obtained and, in particular, whether they thought that the introduction of TQA was beneficial to teaching in higher education.

In view of the time delay between the generation and analysis of the data and subsequent writing up of the findings, it was felt necessary to provide an update on the quality assessment procedure. Chapter 7 provides such an update, commencing with the successor to TQA which was called Subject Review. The quality assessment process continued to operate alongside the quality audit procedure, and this led to widespread discussions concerning the overlap and duplication of the two systems. Proposals were, thus, made for a single system of quality assurance.

This chapter traces in some detail the development of the single system including the involvement of the different parties, e.g. the Government, the funding council (HEFCE), and the representatives of the universities. The first steps involved the formation of the Joint Planning Group (JPG), which ultimately recommended the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Shortly after the establishment of the JPG, the Government announced the appointment of a National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) chaired by Sir Ron Dearing. A number of recommendations about quality and standards were made by the NCIHE and these played a major part in setting the agenda of the work of the QAA. Significantly for university teachers, the NCIHE recommended the establishment of a

professional Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT). The resulting QAA methodology is described in some depth and a critique of the process is provided.

Chapter 8 outlines the conclusions and includes discussions on the status of teaching in higher education, professionalism in university teaching, professional and institutional autonomy, and collegiality and leadership. Two further sections are added including comments on the perceived crisis in education, and some reflections on the Institutional Review procedure. The chapter concludes by relating the findings of the research to the research aims and literature review. The overall conclusion was that, contrary to the majority of the literature, most of the academics in the study welcomed, in principle, an external assessment of teaching primarily because they felt that it would raise the profile of teaching in UK higher education and thus contribute to enhancing the professionalism of university teachers. Even though they felt that TQA did not have direct benefits to teaching and learning, they did believe that it promoted the improvement of administrative systems and helped them to maintain standards.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The 1980s were highly significant for higher education as the effects of the Conservative government's policies were felt. Whereas the literature for the study predominantly spans the time frame from the Robbins' expansion of the 1960s, through to the Dearing Report (1997), the main literature referred to was published during, and as a consequence of, the Tory administration from 1979 to 1997. As the interviews with academics took place between 1996 and early 1998, the questions posed to the interviewees were based on the literature published up to these dates. The study was limited to British higher education, but reference was made to some literature of a comparative nature.

In order to understand the perceptions of academics with respect to their teaching role, it was necessary to have an appreciation of both the external context, particularly in regard to government policy, within which higher education was operating in the 1990s, together with the internal cultural environment, in which academics were working. The literature, thus, included texts on government policy and legislation leading up to the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment, and those on the role and nature of higher education and aspects of the academic i.e. teaching profession. These formed the basis for the examination of the literature together with a study of the concept of 'quality', and the relevant internal quality assurance mechanisms in higher education, particularly those related to assuring the teaching abilities of the academic staff. Selected sociological portraits of higher education were also examined to establish what research had already been done in the area and the methodology used.

This chapter begins with an overview of the range of literature available, followed by discussions under the main subject areas of (a) Government policy and legislation with respect to higher education (b) the role and nature of higher education (c) the academic profession (d) quality management of teaching and learning and (e) sociological studies of higher education.

1.1 Overview of the Literature

The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) has been reporting on academic issues since 1971 and is regarded as the most notable of the specialist professional press. The THES also works in collaboration with others in the production of literature on higher education e.g. the *Innovation in Higher Education* series published in conjunction with the Unit for Innovation in Higher Education at Lancaster University.

In addition there are numerous journals written by, and for, those who research, practice and/or make policy for higher education. These include those with a general orientation including *Higher Education Quarterly*, *Higher Education, Higher Education Review*, and *Studies in Higher Education,* together with those of a more specific nature such as *Quality in Higher Education, Teaching in Higher Education, Higher Education Research and Development,* and the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.*

The majority of texts on British higher education in the period of interest were co-published by the Open University (OU) Press together with the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). The SRHE's aim is to stimulate and co-ordinate research into all aspects of higher education, with the aim of improving quality through the encouragement of debate. The Quality Support Centre (QSC) also had a 'quality' remit for academic institutions and quality agencies both in the UK and internationally. The QSC was created by the OU out of the research, development and information services of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). The CNAA, before its dissolution following the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, was responsible for ensuring the academic standards of higher education courses in colleges and polytechnics. The QSC was responsible for producing a number of publications including the *Higher Education Digest*, and the *QSC Higher Education Report* series, and has since been superseded by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI). Notable commercial publishers of texts on higher education include Routledge and Kogan Page.

Government initiated reports, White Papers and legislation were available from HMSO publications. National agencies such as the funding councils, the most significant for the purposes of this study being the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), produce a range of publications covering assessment of the quality of education, funding, student statistics information, and value for money studies in the higher education sector. Auditing of the quality processes in higher education institutions (as opposed to Teaching Quality Assessment of individual subjects) became the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) following the 1992 Act, and this also produced a range of literature on 'quality' issues. The HEQC was succeeded, in 1997, by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the establishment of which effectively formed the end of the time frame for the research. The QAA was established to provide an integrated quality assurance service for higher education institutions in the UK, and its remit included both quality audit and subject level assessment. The QAA, thus, also produced a range of publications on the development of the quality assessment and audit procedure together with institutional and

departmental level review reports. In addition the Committee for Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), also published significant discussion documents and formal reports during the period of interest.

There is an abundance of literature on higher education in the UK, but, as Blaxter et al point out 'it is not as large as might be expected and it remains patchy' (Blaxter et al, 1998:285). Whilst there is little in the way of comprehensive general guides on academic work, there is a large and increasing amount of material on the teaching role. This increase has been evident particularly during the last decade due to the growth in student numbers and the greater attention paid to 'quality'. Practical guides of a general or more specialised nature tend to dominate the literature on the teaching role. Texts on the sociological aspects of teaching in higher education i.e. biographical, autobiographical or experiential accounts are more limited.

Teaching is but one of the academic roles. It is a major function and one that is the most publicly acknowledged, but it is not always the most dominant. The widespread view is that academic work is broadly categorised as teaching, research and administration. Blaxter et al (1998) regard this categorisation as an oversimplification and identify five main academic roles, adding writing and networking to the three previously identified (Blaxter et al 1998). The study looked predominantly at the teaching role, but acknowledged that academic work usually involves a combination of aspects. Management of both teaching and the learning experience in higher education is also significant for the purposes of the study. There is considerable British literature on managing in higher education, although it is not as extensive as that for teaching. Again there has been notable contemporary development.

1.2 Government Policy towards Higher Education

Of initial significance, for the purposes of this study, with respect to policy was the publication of the Robbins Report in 1963. The adequacy of the arrangements for higher education at the time was in question due to the increasing demand for higher education places. The Robbins Committee set about developing some co-ordinating principles and a general conception of objectives for higher education.

Robbins envisaged the expansion of an elite system, but the government had departed significantly from the Robbins proposals when it decided, early in 1965, that there should be a large scale development of higher education outside the universities (Robinson 1968). This was confirmed in the White Paper *A Plan for Polytechnics and other Colleges* (1966) which proposed the formation of some large polytechnics based

on existing colleges, and spelt out in more detail the characteristics of this separate sector of higher education. One anomaly was apparent, which was that they were identified as institutions of higher education, but were located within the further education sector (Whitburn et al 1965).

The role and nature of the polytechnic sector have been examined by a number of authors. Robinson (1968) surveyed the developments in further education since the war concentrating on those colleges that were to form the new polytechnics. He discussed the Robbins Report and the 'binary policy' outlined by Crosland (Robinson 1968:193) and gave a detailed plan of the problems which confronted them, proposing ways in which they should develop. Whitburn et al (1976) adopted a sociological orientation whilst Wood (1965) concentrated on their historical development. Pratt (1997) provided a full record of the changing policy aims, the nature of the students and staff in the polytechnics, the distinctive courses they developed and the ways in which they were governed and funded.

British universities were well regarded during the 1970s but the Thatcher Government, which came into power in 1979, indicated a greater degree of intervention from the start of their period of office. Up until this time, universities were regarded as private institutions in receipt of public funds and so were protected from public-expenditure control. A charter was a guarantee of freedom from interference in institutional self-government - but not from Thatcher (Jenkins 1996). Simon Jenkins (1996) provided an analysis of the Thatcher years and the range of policies that guided British public administration through the 1980s and early 1990s. The chapter on higher education was interestingly entitled 'Taming Shrews', indicating Jenkins' view that Thatcher's aim was to bring the universities to heel.

Sir Keith Joseph's departure and Kenneth Baker's arrival as Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1986 resulted in a greater centralist thrust and the publication of the White Paper *Meeting the Challenge* (1987), which was to form higher education's contribution to the 1988 *Education Reform Act*. The 1988 Act was preceded by the Jarratt Report 1985, on university administration, published by the CVCP/UGC. The Jarratt Committee was shocked at the inadequacy of most university management and proposed a formal planning process with effective management information monitoring and evaluation systems. Few universities could deny that their administration was lax, and use of resources wasteful, but it was felt that the subsequent 1988 Act ran counter to the concept of a free-market university sector (Jenkins 1996).

The 1988 *Education Reform Act* has been analysed by a number of authors. Maclure (1992) discussed the implications of the Act, whereas Williams (1990) considered the demographic pressures and market conditions informing the legislation. The theme of 'control' in relation to the 1988 Act was clearly indicated by Bash and Coulby (1989) and Lawton (1989). Though the binary line was ended by the *Further and Higher Education Act* 1992, the 1988 Act was regarded as more significant for relationships between the state and higher education (Henkel 2000:41). By the mid-1990s, therefore, Government had 'established a framework of law, regulation, incentives, rewards and sanctions within which higher education institutions were to operate' (Henkel 2000:47).

1.3 Role and Nature of Higher Education

The 1960s have often been regarded as the 'golden years' for higher education (Hufner 1991). During the 1970s onwards, however, the academic profession, at least in industrialised nations, had been under considerable pressure and strain, and morale had sagged (Altbach 1991a, Lindop et al 1982). The changes called into question the role and nature of higher education itself and, in particular, a comparison of Robbins' ideals with those driving policies of quality assessment and resulting in the establishment of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA).

Barnett (1990) described the Robbins Report (1963) as 'the last important statement of a liberal higher education' (Barnett 1990:13). Robbins acknowledged both the 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' functions of higher education. The 'intrinsic' qualities include the search for truth and the pursuit of objective knowledge, whilst 'extrinsic' qualities are related to providing services to society. The latter has also been described as an 'instrumental' (Barnett 1990) or a 'functionalist' (Minogue 1973) approach to higher education. The polytechnics were originally developed as a distinctive sector of higher education catering predominantly for 'extrinsic' functions, unlike the 'traditional' universities. As they became established, however, they increasingly resembled the universities (Whitburn et al 1976), and following the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, were allowed to call themselves universities. In some respects, though, following the 1992 Act, universities were regarded as becoming more like polytechnics than vice versa. This was because 'Baker's concept of a work-oriented, vocational, commercial institution run more like an externally accountable public corporation than a collegium of scholars', was a concept more akin to that of a polytechnic (Jenkins, 1996:152).

During the 1960s and 1970s the discussions about higher education, following its expansion, became more explicitly political with the result that 'the idea of the

university' changed fundamentally (Halsey 1995) and the concept of higher education as standing for intrinsically worthwhile ends was lost (Barnett 1990). The change in management of British higher education implicit in the policy which informed the 1988 *Education Reform Act*, resulted in the idea of the university as an independent centre of learning and research being swept away. Instead universities were made the servants of the State and its priorities (Maclure 1992). Some believed that liberal learning was being turned into narrowly vocational training, and the university was being subordinated to the market (Brecher et al 1996). Since the early 1980s the extrinsic values of higher education had driven governmental policies, including those of quality control, and it was difficult to combine these with the characteristics of the institutions themselves (Van Vught 1993).

A number of authors have adopted a philosophical approach to the discussions on higher education. Most notable of these is Barnett (1990, 1997 & 1999) who made reference to Newman's (1873) classic text on the idea of the university. In *The Idea of Higher Education* , Barnett (1990) identified the intrinsic worth of higher education and argued that we should put into practice a new conception of liberal education, with the student as an independent and critical learner taking centre stage. He proposed that we should work towards a theory of higher education, which recognised these central philosophical problems, whilst also being sensitive to the social dimension of higher education. The latter included both the external relationships with wider society and the internal social dynamics of the academic community and the student experience (Barnett 1990:202).

1.4 The Academic Profession

Following on from an examination of the role and nature of higher education, it was felt necessary to explore aspects of the academic profession including what was meant by professionalism particularly with respect to teaching in higher education. Altbach (1991) provided a comprehensive overview of higher education history and culture. This text was produced as part of a continuing research programme in the field of comparative higher education, and included a selection of key topics in substantive essays, both analytical and interpretative in nature, written by top scholars in their fields.

Altbach (1991b) acknowledged the conservative nature of academic institutions, noting that reform was not easy in the academic setting. The historical tradition of individual and institutional autonomy, which was highly valued by the academic profession, made change difficult. Despite this, higher education had undergone immense redefinition,

expansion and change over time, whilst still retaining the wish to preserve its academic traditions (Altbach 1991b).

Other authors (Altbach 1991, Warren Piper 1994) focused on the unique nature of the academic profession, despite seeing itself as a traditional profession. The knowledge system and the academic profession were international, whilst the academics were firmly embedded in national institutions and traditions (Altbach 1991). Consequently lecturers had a double identity i.e. a subject-based identity and an academic identity, and it was the latter which did not meet all of the criteria associated with a quintessential profession (Warren Piper 1994). The issue of whether the academic profession was one profession or whether each discipline constituted a separate profession has also been raised (Fulton 1996). This leads to consideration of what is meant by the terms 'profession' and 'professionalism' as it applies to academia, with specific reference to teaching in higher education and concepts such as peer review, academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

1.4.1 Teaching as a Profession

The difficulties in formulating a single definition for a 'profession' have been acknowledged, and there is also little consensus on the traits constituting 'professionalisation' (Friedson 1994, Warren Piper 1994). Despite this, Friedson tentatively proposed a definition for professionalisation:-

'Professionalisation might be defined as a process by which an organised occupation usually, but not always, by virtue of making a claim to special esoteric competence and to concern for the quality of its work and its benefits to society, obtains the exclusive right to perform a particular kind of work, control training for and access to it and control the right of determining and evaluating the way the work is performed'
(Friedson 1994:62)

The traits constituting a profession have been identified by Friedson (1994) and Warren Piper (1994) as including:

- A full-time occupation or one which constitutes a living i.e. not an amateur.
- Members have completed some form of higher education, of significant duration, leading to complex specialised work involving theoretical knowledge, skill and judgement that ordinary people do not possess, may not wholly comprehend and cannot readily evaluate.

- The kind of work a profession does is believed to be especially important to the wellbeing of individuals or of society at large, i.e. is orientated to an ethical service to others.
- A practitioner's primary identity is with the profession rather than the employer, and (s)he can realistically envisage a career over most of his/her working life during which (s)he retains the particular occupational identity no matter in which institution he/she works.
- A professional is committed to a calling and his/her first responsibility is to the client.
- Essential to the relationship is the knowledge gap between the professional and client.
- Professions are independent of significant formal control by non-professionals and are largely responsible to their own professional associations and to fellow professionals i.e. self-governing in character, and typically enjoying a high degree of discretion or autonomy.

How, therefore, do these traits fit the concept of university teaching as a profession? University teaching was spawned in the medieval universities and was one of the three original professions of medicine, law and the clergy; university teaching being part of the latter (Friedson 1994). As Altbach (1991a) noted, teaching was the defining characteristic of the academic profession. 'From the beginning, professors have taught. Research and a myriad of other roles came later' (Altbach 1991a:23). As universities have become increasingly complex, however, the central role of teaching has sometimes seemed less clear (Altbach 1991a).

Warren Piper (1994) questioned whether teaching in higher education could be regarded as a 'profession' or whether it would be more correctly termed an 'expert occupation'. This term was proposed by Rueschemeyer (1983) as an alternative to 'profession' and was taken to imply all of the attributes of a 'profession', except those arising from the existence of professional bodies. For university teaching there was no professional body (equivalent to e.g. the British Medical Association), which was required to recognise and admit an individual into the profession before (s)he might practise. Warren Piper (1994) stated that in many respects, the teaching institutions themselves acted like professional bodies. He also argued that an external examiner stood proxy for the professional body to the extent that the degree determined membership (Warren Piper 1994). The Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT) was subsequently established in 1999 to act as a professional body for university teachers.

Friedson (1994) emphasised the capacity to control and regulate themselves as the mark of professional organisations. He argued that the pattern of self-control based on professional bodies was peculiarly Anglo-American and not found in other parts of Europe (Friedson 1983). He acknowledged, however, the need for indicators of expertise such as credentials, which presupposed some method of recognition and approval of courses by occupational associations for 'certifying and titling prospective specialists' (Friedson 1994:159).

The unique nature and duality of the academic profession was discussed by Warren Piper (1994). University teachers have two sources of professional identity, i.e. the occupation of teaching, and the occupation for which the students are being prepared. If the professional status of a university teacher was derived from the former, rather than the latter, then it was the only profession that was dedicated to producing members of other professions (Warren Piper 1994). This also raised the question as to whether the esoteric knowledge of the university teacher, which was a key trait of a profession, was concerned with teaching or with the subject taught. In addition, was the esoteric knowledge of one academic discipline so different from that of another that it must be learned, and consequently taught, in different ways to other disciplines? If this was so, then there could be no unified academic profession (Warren Piper 1994).

Warren Piper believed that there was a unifying language for university teachers, which drew on psychology of teaching, educational theory and epistemology and concluded that, with reference to the criteria, teaching in higher education was conducted in a manner typical of a profession (Warren Piper 1994). Friedson (1994) did not differentiate between teaching and research in his discussions on the academic profession, and included scholars and scientists amongst those occupations that resembled the ideal model of professionalism. He integrated the teaching and research roles, noting that it was the university teaching jobs that provided academics with a living, and that these jobs required daily concern with issues of scholarship and research (Friedson 1994:177-178).

Peer review, rather than hierarchical directive, was the normal means by which professional self-regulation took place. As Brennan et al (1994) pointed out, although peer review is 'frequently regarded as the traditional mechanism of academic self-regulation', it still 'remains a somewhat vague and ill-defined concept' (Brennan et al 1994:7). Williams (1988) discussed the different traditions of the pre-1992 universities where self-regulation has predominated, with those of the post–1992 universities who have always been much more accountable to external agencies, and where there has been more attempt at collective agreements.

Brennan et al (1994) reported on the findings of a collaborative project with the American Council on Education and the QSC, in association with other members of the International Working Conference on Quality Assessment in Higher Education. They concluded that despite severe strains in the peer review of research, it appeared to retain widespread support in the academic community, possibly because of a lack of viable alternatives (Brennan et al 1994). The issues of subjectivity and conventionality of the peer review process, together with the problems associated with separating expert knowledge of a group of specialists from the special interests of that group have been identified as limitations of peer review (Williams 1988, Brennan et al 1994). Becher (1989) also noted a number of drawbacks including the uneven operation of peer review between different knowledge fields (Becher 1989). He concluded, however, that for all its faults, peer review must be tolerated because 'no one has yet come up with an approach to academic evaluation that would not be discernibly worse' (Becher 1989:64).

Brennan et al (1994) felt that the peer review of research was granted greater legitimacy than that of teaching primarily because it appeared to employ more universalistic criteria and standards. They acknowledge that although there were few alternatives for peer review in research, there were several alternative approaches to the assessment of educational quality. Two main issues were identified; 1. Quality was the responsibility of the individual, hence appointment procedures were of prime importance and 2. The quality judgements of different stakeholders should be taken into account, termed the 'stakeholder approach' (Brennan et al, 1994:21).

Friedson (1994) concluded that the characteristic mode of supervision and evaluation of professional work should remain collegial and involve peer review. This did not mean, however, that all other sources of evaluation should be excluded. He argued that outsiders, both lay and professional, should be appropriately engaged in assuring that internal peer review actually did go on within the profession, and was practised effectively so that more than a narrowly collegial point of view was taken into account (Friedson 1994).

1.4.2 Autonomy and Accountability

As previously discussed, Friedson (1994) emphasised self-regulation and autonomy as the mark of professional organisations. When looking at the academic profession, we need to distinguish between professional autonomy, usually referred to as academic freedom, and institutional autonomy. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are closely related, but the former relates to academics whilst the latter to institutions. The

two concepts can, in principle, exist independently of each other (Tight 1988, Shils 1991), but they tend to be mutually supporting, and it is desirable to have both if each is to flourish (Tight 1988).

British universities began as privately owned, self-governing corporations of scholars. Historically the right to award degrees was a privilege conferred through a charter granted by church or state. This reliance on church or state has meant that despite having effective institutional autonomy, no university was wholly autonomous nor ever had been (Shils 1991). Financial dependence can lead to infringements on autonomy, and hence there was a conflict between autonomy and accountability. This tension had existed since the establishment of universities in the medieval period. As universities became more central to societal development and required significant societal resources, however, they came under increased challenges to traditional autonomy (Altbach 1991a).

The origins of academic freedom can be traced to the need of the early universities to protect themselves and their members from religious or political dogmatism and persecution (Tight 1988). There seemed to be little clarity not only about what academic freedom actually was (Bligh 1982, Tight 1988) but, also, how it could be crucially infringed. Dismissal was often regarded as the most common mode of infringement, hence the link between academic freedom and tenure (Shils 1991, Russell 1992). Shils (1991) concluded, however, that there seemed to be very few instances where genuine academic freedom had been restricted.

One of the arguments in defence of academic freedom was that it helped to maintain the morale of the academic profession and, thus, its creative power (Shils 1991). The morale of the academic profession, however, was thought to be determined as much by remuneration and promotion practices as by principles of academic freedom (Altbach 1991a). There was general agreement that the privilege of academic freedom also carried with it expectations, responsibility and accountability (Bligh 1982, Tight 1988, Russell 1992). 'The question is not whether there should be accountability: it is what form accountability should take' (Russell 1992:131).

According to Shattock (1994), the University Grants Committee (UGC) was regarded by some as the lost champion of university autonomy and academic freedom. Both of these were, however, protected in law when the UGC was abolished. Clauses were forced into the 1988 *Education Reform Act* by the university lobby to protect universities from political interference (university autonomy), and to protect an individual academic's freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions (academic freedom).

Rear (1994) argued that erosion of autonomy was largely prompted by the past reluctance of universities to change and to serve the economy, and their failure to give a satisfactory account of their stewardship of large sums of taxpayers' money. He emphasised that good management was essential as a defence against further erosion of autonomy (Rear 1994a). With respect to academic freedom, Rear suggested drawing a distinction between the delivery and the content of courses and to regard delivery as subject to disciplinary action in cases of incompetence, but the judgement about content should be left with the individual academic concerned (Rear 1994b).

'There is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that collegial forms of governance in higher education are on the retreat' (Tapper and Palfreyman 1998:157). Collegiality, though originating from a particular model of the university, the collegiate universities, has increasingly come to embody ideas on both university governance and the relationship between academic colleagues. Integral to the idea of collegiality, is the notion of collective government of institutions, that is the participation of the dons in the affairs of the university (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998). Expansion in student numbers works against collegiality because increases in size make institutions and departments less humane and more unmanageable (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998). Managing universities during the transition from an elitist to a mass system has been complex and difficult, and has tended to result in a significant strengthening of managerialist and administrative systems, with the formulation of more comprehensive and explicit regulatory and, thus, interventionist controls.

Trow (1994) believed that the British government was motivated more by its desire to control the academic community than by a quest for quality higher education, and argued that collegiality had given way to managerialism. Trow (1994) stated that 'managerialism' was a substitute for a relationship of trust between the British government and universities in the UK. The Jarratt Report (1985) was seen as explicitly encouraging managerial approaches in higher education (Trow 1994, Thorne and Cuthbert 1996, Dearlove 1997). Trow (1994) distinguished between 'soft managerialism', which focused on improving the efficiency of institutions, and 'hard managerialism', which involved assessment followed by reward or punishment and linked to funding. He stated that it was the latter that was currently the dominant force in reshaping British higher education. Trow (1994) advised universities to regain control through 'soft managerialism'. He believed that the resulting strengthened administrative leadership arising out of this movement was the best, and perhaps the only, defence of university autonomy. Dearlove (1997) also emphasised leadership, stating that 'the problem is that leadership tends to be the missing link in universities'. Dearlove

recommended appropriate staff development so that academics with a talent for 'the leadership of organisational change can be encouraged and trained to take on their responsibilities' (Dearlove 1997:70).

Some have argued that academic work has been deprofessionalised (Trow 1994) and proletarianised (Dearlove 1997). Trow (1994) reporting on a year-long study on the impact of government policy on academics and institutions in the UK warned that 'managerial' interference of government and its agencies was destroying the professionalism of academics (Brookman 1993, Trow 1994). Quality improvement, it was argued, could only be achieved if each person took responsibility for improving their own work, and the institution's leaders managed effectively to that end. The withdrawal of trust in universities meant that government was no longer prepared to accept the 'inner motivations' of academics, which was the basis on which all professions have claimed a measure of autonomy over their spheres of competence (Trow 1994). Trow warned that this would ultimately lead to the deprofessionalisation of the academic work force (Trow 1994).

Friedson (1994) pointed out that a profession's command over an exclusive body of knowledge and skill contributed to the sum of its professional power. A profession's power and autonomy, however, were influenced by how economic capital was concentrated and organised. Management could control resources and, hence, influence the terms and conditions of work, but could not control most of what professionals did and how they did it. In other words, the professional worker controlled the content of the work itself (Friedson 1994). Friedson (1994) also acknowledged that as government regulation increased an organisation's accountability for the performance of its professional workers, those in the administrative elite were more likely to assume a less collegial relationship with the professional workers. The administrative elite was able to exert economic and administrative power, but had no technical or cognitive power. Whilst some decline in relative prestige and income was possible, Friedson (1994), thus, argued that trends, identified by some writers, towards changes in status so extreme as to lead to either deprofessionalisation or proletarianisation were empirically unverifiable (Friedson 1994).

Deprofessionalisation refers to the erosion of status of professionals and consequent decline in professional power. Friedson (1994) argued that there was no logical reason for deprofessionalisation, since there was no demonstrable interference with the profession's exercise of authority over its own technical areas of expertise. The prime argument of the proletarianisation thesis was the assertion that bureaucratisation i.e. the organisation of professional work into a complex division of labour ordered by

hierarchical supervision, had led to the loss of professionals' traditionally asserted right of self-direction, effectively resulting in deskilling (Friedson 1994). 'Bureaucratic organisation is assumed to be antithetical to the freedom of activity imputed to the professional' (Friedson 1994:137). The underlying assumption was that professionals owed their allegiance to their peers and their profession, whilst seeking to control their work in the light of their own standards and resisting taking orders from bureaucratic superiors, who asserted the aims of the employing organisation (Friedson 1994). Friedson argued that, for professionals, members of their profession routinely filled the supervisory, managerial and often executive positions. This did not represent any reduction in the control of professional work by the profession itself. Hence professions as corporate bodies had not lost their capacity to exercise control over their members' work, even though individual members might have done so (Friedson 1994). Miller also concluded that 'there may be a process of degradation and intensification, but not necessarily wholesale deskilling' (Miller 1995:157)

The university has evolved into a major societal institution commanding significant resources and also into a complex bureaucracy (Altbach 1991a:26). The bureaucracy is largely a creation of the modern Western world. Max Weber's (1921) ideas on bureaucracy were embedded in the broader theory of the rationalisation process, in which Weber identified formal rationality, i.e. the search for the optimum means to a given end being shaped by rules, regulations and larger social structures, rather than individual choice (Weber 1921). An extension of Weber's theory can be found in Ritzer's (2000) McDonaldization paradigm. McDonaldization refers to the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant were coming to dominate more and more sectors of society (Ritzer 2000). McDonaldization also incorporates the four basic dimensions of rationalisation i.e. efficiency, predictability, quantification and the use of non-human technology. Similar principles are found in scientific management, created by Frederick W Taylor, and in the development of the assembly line by Henry Ford.

Despite the advantages it offered Weber (1921) acknowledged that the bureaucracy had many negative aspects, which he described as the irrationality of rationality. As well as dehumanising, bureaucracies could become increasingly inefficient because of, for example, tangles of red tape and the emphasis on quantification, which could lead to poor quality work. Because of such inadequacies, bureaucracies began to lose control over those who worked within, and were served by them, hence they became irrational. Ritzer (2000) stated that universities offered many examples of the pressure for greater efficiency, predictability, quantification and the use of nonhuman technology, and argued that they had become highly irrational places (Ritzer 2000). Ritzer painted a picture of the McUniversity, in which students as consumers perceived education as a commodity,

and academe was expected to adapt from the producer to a consumer-driven approach (Poynter 2002). The provision of academic teaching, however, did not fit easily into this paradigm of consumption (Furedi 2002:35).

1.5 Quality in Higher Education

'Quality' as it applied to teaching in higher education came into debate following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) in the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*. TQA involved the external review of, and judgements about, the quality of teaching and learning in institutions, and originally included direct observation of teaching. This should be distinguished from quality audit, which was external scrutiny aimed at providing assurances that institutions had suitable quality control mechanisms in place. The former was the responsibility of the funding councils, whilst the latter was that of the HEQC. Despite the division of responsibilities, the potential for overlap and duplication was clear (Green 1993) and this was one of the issues raised during the THES 'Quality Debate' (1993). Other issues that were raised in the debate included comments on the bureaucracy of the process, and the dangers of combining quality inspection and funding under the same body. The feeling was that self-regulation was preferable to government control, and that managerialism should not be a substitute for professionalism.

Prior to the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, two reports were published on teaching quality. The Hale Committee was appointed in 1961 by the UGC, to make a comparative study of undergraduate teaching methods and practices in the universities and colleges in the UK. The Hale Committee felt that the challenge to university teachers was the increased number of students, increased diversity, and the growth in the volume of knowledge. Hale recommended that all newly appointed academic staff should undergo training in teaching, but felt that a prolonged course of training might act as a deterrent to recruitment. Hale also believed that inclination and self-interest would lead the academic to research in his/her own subject, rather than to a study of teaching methods (Hale 1964).

The Reynolds Report (1986) on *Universities' methods and procedures for maintaining and monitoring academic standards in the content of their course and in the quality of their teaching,* pointed out the difficulties associated with defining the terms 'quality' and 'standards' and, in particular, finding a measure for teaching. Reynolds stated that the quality of higher education 'will depend on the quality of the staff more than on any other factor' and recommended 'regular appraisals of staff performance particularly in regard to teaching' (Reynolds 1986:4). Reynolds (1986) recommended that the best

way to maintain standards was by a process of regular review of procedures within a framework of maximal university autonomy.

The theme of 'standards' was taken up by Moodie (1986 & 1988). Contributors focussed on distinguishing standards, criteria and quality, examining standards from a historical or an economic viewpoint, discussing staff and students, and the role of the UGC and HMI in relation to maintaining standards. In the final chapter of this text Neave observed that the concern over quality was not limited to the UK, but was widely shared with other Western European countries. This comparative theme was also evident in two international conferences in 1991 and 1993, resulting in texts by Craft (1992 and 1994).

Loder and Williams (1993) reported on a two-year study (1991-1993) on the conditions needed for high quality teaching at undergraduate level. This study involved a survey of students, academic teaching staff and administrators and managers in three former polytechnics and two universities. The most significant conclusions for the purposes of this research were:

- that both students and employers supported inspection of teaching by Government bodies, whilst academics remained neutral on the issue, and
- only two national policies that were being implemented or discussed were deemed to be beneficial to the quality of undergraduate teaching. These were the introduction of a national training programme for new lecturers, and using student feedback as an indicator of teaching quality.

Barnett (1992) adopted a philosophical and sociological perspective in what was described as the first systematic exploration of the topic of quality in higher education. Barnett (1992) integrated two perspectives of the meaning of quality and its improvement at the levels of both the institution and the course. Barnett argued for the concept of management *for* quality rather than *of* quality, and the establishment of an institutional culture not so much of 'total quality management but rather one of total quality care' (Barnett 1992:133). Barnett (1992) argued against the use of performance indicators, the real purpose of which he believed was control and prediction of an institution, rather than being a means of assessing 'quality'.

Green's (1993)*What is Quality in Higher Education?*, was stimulated directly by the 1992 Act. This text drew on the findings of a national research project funded by government, business and higher education, which was designed to develop and test methods for systematically assessing quality. Green (1993) illustrated how 'quality' had overtaken 'efficiency' as the key challenge facing higher education in the 1990s.

She emphasised the growing awareness that institutions were accountable not only to government but also, in an increasingly competitive market, to the students as customers. Green (1993) drew on the theory and practice of quality management to examine how quality could be defined and assessed.

Ellis (1993) adopted a more practical approach to the subject of 'quality'. This text included three themes i) descriptions of approaches to quality assurance including professionalism, ii) quality teaching characteristics and iii) development of university teachers, incorporating staff appraisal and development. Ellis (1993) emphasised that the quality of teaching should be measured by its fitness for the purpose of promoting learning. Echoing similar concerns to other authors, Ellis identified the issues arising from this concept as including:

- there were few theories linking teaching and learning
- professional status and credibility derived from research capability rather than teaching
- there was no formal requirement of training for teaching
- there were no generally accepted standards for teaching
- the students were rarely conceived as customers
- assessment of the quality of teaching generally rested with examination results
- how far course validation ensured quality teaching by e.g. the inclusion of teaching methods.

Goodlad (1995) argued that we must articulate a way of defining and defending a variety of models of the university. The book offered thoughts regarding principles on four key areas in higher education, including curriculum, teaching methods, research and organisation, and identified four heresies for each. Goodlad (1995) defined a heresy as being an exaggeration of 'the truth' in one direction or another, and asserted that 'a society which by accident or by design limits the opportunities of persons in any of the dimensions' is at fault (Goodlad 1995:23). Any drift into one of the quadrants to the neglect of the others resulted in some form of 'heresy' being perpetrated.

Harvey and Knight (1996) adopted the theme of quality as a transformation process that connected issues concerning the teaching, learning and assessment of students to quality. They highlighted the tension between 'quality as accountability' and 'quality as transformation' and argued that the former had led to a compliance culture rather than producing transformation in students. Harvey and Knight proposed an alternative improvement-led approach, which focused on empowering academic staff, teaching, student learning, the assessment of student learning, and how universities could transform themselves.

1.5.1 What is Quality?

In order to develop appropriate quality assurance procedures, it is necessary to determine what is actually meant by 'quality'. The concept of 'quality' is, however, notoriously difficult to define.

> 'Quality .....you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is'. 'But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists?' (Pirsig 1989:182).

The quality 'gurus' proposed a number of definitions from Crosby's (1979) 'conformance to requirements' to Oakland's (1989) 'meeting the requirements of the customer' or even Deming (1988) who sought to delight rather than merely satisfy the customer i.e. to exceed the customer's stated requirements. The quality definition chosen for higher education was Juran's (1974) 'fitness for purpose' approach. A number of issues are raised by these definitions as they apply to 'quality' in higher education. The first is that the quality 'gurus' developed their theories of 'quality' for manufacturing industry initially. Higher education is primarily a service and, although the principles of 'quality' are common for the most part, it is known that the quality of a service is not only more difficult to control, but is also more difficult to measure or evaluate (Shroeder 1989).

Another issue is the centrality of the customer in the definitions of 'quality'. In higher education there are a multiplicity of customers who cannot all be satisfied simultaneously (Elton 1993). The customers for higher education include the students, employers, parents and the government, which funds universities on behalf of the taxpayer. These are known collectively as stakeholders. It is the student who is regarded as being the primary customer and, consequently, who should be central when considering 'quality' of teaching and learning (Barnett 1992, Green 1993, Ellis 1993b, Goodlad 1995). A major difficulty is that in higher education, 'quality' is not easily assessed by students, or any other consumers for that matter, and almost impossible for them to make reliable judgements about it before they have experienced it (Williams and Loder, 1990). Ellis advocated that 'it is not so much that the student as consumer determines what is of quality in *knowledge,* but that he or she should be the judge of quality in *teaching methods'* (Ellis 1993b:19).

Many authors agreed that quality in higher education should be judged by the quality of student learning, rather than the quality of teaching, hence it was *how students learn*,

rather than *what lecturers do*, which should be the focus of attention (Ramsden 1988, Goodlad 1995). It was acknowledged, however, that there was no simple relationship between teaching and learning, and that theories of learning did not help much in the design and evaluation of learning activities (Ramsden 1988, Ellis 1993a). Ramsden (1988) argued for a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to the assessment of student learning in order to encourage and reward understanding. He also suggested that staff and students should become partners in learning since, in order for learning to take place, the student must take an active role.

A further issue which presented problems with the 'fitness for purpose' approach was that higher education was a contested concept, hence the approaches to assessing it would differ depending on what were regarded as the fundamental purposes (Reynolds 1986,Barnett 1992). In addition, the definition failed to include an assessment as to the quality of 'purposes' (Goodlad 1995). Barnett differentiated between general purposes of higher education institutions and specific purposes as indicated in institutional missions. He stated that many higher education institutions were hazy over what were their essential purposes (Barnett 1992).

1.5.2 Assuring Quality of Academic Staff

The difficulties of controlling and evaluating the quality of a service such as higher education are recognised. A greater burden for service quality is placed on the workforce, hence selection of employees, specification of procedures (where possible) and workforce training were critical in service industries (Shroeder 1989). The competence or potential of academic staff with respect to their teaching role should, therefore, be assured during the recruitment process, and further clarified and enhanced by means of induction, mentoring, appraisal (Reynolds 1986), and staff development and training (Hale 1961, Barnett 1992, Gibbs & Coffey 2001).

The Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) report *Learning from Audit* (1994) noted that a number of universities did not consider the teaching abilities of new teaching staff within the appointment process, or that policies on the assessment of teaching competence were not uniformly applied. The HEQC (1994a), thus, recommended that:

> 'Institutions will wish to ensure that their appointment procedures take into account the competence and aptitude of staff with regard to the full requirements of the position', (HEQC 1994a, para 23).

Following the publication of *Learning from Audit* (HEQC 1994), audit reports subsequently indicated that, in many institutions, candidates for academic posts were increasingly required to give a short oral presentation to staff, in order to assess their teaching ability, as part of the selection process. This practice was, however, still variable between faculties. Several reports, therefore, indicated that further attention should be given to the incorporation of a means of assessing the communication skills and teaching competence of short-listed applicants for both full- and part-time posts (HEQC 1996).

HEQC audit reports also noted that many institutions provided an induction programme for all newly appointed staff, typically comprising a centrally organised course of 2-3 days' duration, offered twice a year together with less formal arrangements in schools and departments. Reports had commented on the difficulties that some staff experienced in attending courses due to teaching commitments and the variable participation rate of part-time staff. Auditors recommended that:

> 'institutions should consider how to ensure that all staff benefit equally from a systematic approach to induction' (HEQC 1996:62).

Mentoring involves the cultivation of a close supportive relationship with a colleague, who is usually more experienced than, and senior to, their protégé. The focus for the mentoring relationship is on the personal and career development of the protégé. The mentor might also be responsible for guiding junior staff through any probationary process (Blaxter et al 1998b).

> 'Mentorship when carried out well allows for the rapid induction of new members of staff, and provides them with a source of advice and support regarding all aspects of their working lives, It can be useful during all periods of a career and offer as much to the mentor as to the protégé' (Blaxter et al 1998b:74).

Blaxter et al (1998b) noted, however, that for a variety of reasons, which included inadequate training for mentors, the formal mentoring arrangements did not always work well.

Organisational appraisal systems were used to formalise the on-going informal appraisal processes, which took place at all levels of the organisation, for the benefit of both the individual and the organisation. The primary purpose of an appraisal system must be established to ensure that procedures, training and individual expectations of the system

were not in conflict (Torrington & Hall 1991). The Institute of Personnel Management (1988) advised strongly against a direct relationship between pay and performance appraisal, and felt that the most rewarding and justifiable purpose would be for improving current performance.

The former Conservative government imposed regular staff appraisal on the UK higher education system as a condition for agreeing a pay award.

> 'Before then few universities or colleges had formal appraisal systems in place; appraisal now forms an essential part of all institutions' quality assurance procedures' (Blaxter et al 1998b:202).

Included in its 'Checklist for Quality Assurance Systems 1994', the HEQC stated that:

> 'Institutions will wish to have an appraisal system in place for all staff' (HEQC 1994 para 25).

Professional organisations, such as higher education, represented special difficulties for appraisal, however, due to their strong emphasis on personal and professional autonomy. Schofield (1989) recommended a self-appraisal scheme, which integrated the results with information obtained from other sources e.g. a course review mechanism (Schofield 1989). Nisbet (1988) expressed concern that an appraisal system could readily become a mechanism for control, a matter of compliance, not of standards. He recommended:

> 'stronger reliance on self-evaluation set in a context of collegiate effort and shared accountability' (Nisbet 1988:104).

Barnett (1992) suggested that as the quality of learning could not be assessed directly, it was necessary to do so indirectly by assessing the value that an institution attached to teaching and learning. In this respect, Barnett stated that staff development was crucial and expressed doubt that institutions sufficiently orchestrated their staff development activities so that they did lead to more effective learning (Barnett, 1992:143).

HEQC audit reports showed that staff development and training were receiving greater priority as a strategic issue. Reports indicated, however that:

> 'the emphasis of staff development activities was often on helping new staff and there was a need for greater emphasis on evaluating the needs of, and

providing staff development for, mid-career staff. This included a focus on the creation of effective teaching practitioners, the development for staff undertaking welfare and pastoral functions, as well as continuing professional development programmes' (HEQC 1996:68).

Audit reports also suggested that institutions should:

'consider ways to ensure that new staff obtain appropriate support, advice and feedback on their teaching and other duties during their probationary period' (HEQC 1996:68).

In several instances, the reports recommended that:

'some form of mandatory and certificated teacher training, which could be integrated with a postgraduate certificate of education, should be a condition of appointment for all staff without a relevant qualification' (HEQC 1996:68).

In addition they recommended that consideration should be given to extending arrangements to cover part-time staff (HEQC 1996).

The significance attached to training was echoed in a report by Gibbs and Coffey (2001), who, in 1998, began a comparative study involving nine countries and twenty two universities, on whether training improved teaching. They concluded that once teachers had been trained, students rated them significantly more positively on every aspect of teaching quality. They also found that trained teachers became more student focused and significantly less teacher focused, whilst untrained teachers moved in the opposite direction. Gibbs and Coffey pointed out that many of the latter described their departments as traditional and intolerant of experimentation and so they directed their teaching methods more closely to what they felt their colleagues expected. Gibbs and Coffey, thus, concluded that training programmes provided an alternative culture in which thinking about teaching and experimentation were encouraged. In the absence of supportive departments, therefore, training appeared to be essential. In an earlier study Gibbs and Coffey found that as little as three month's training had a positive impact (Gibbs and Coffey 2001).

1.5.3 Students as Customers

Assuring the quality of teaching has two main elements including a) assuring the quality of the teaching staff by means of recruitment and development procedures and b)

implementing appropriate feedback systems. Such feedback systems in academia include student evaluation together with external monitoring such as that provided by external examiners and accreditation. The focus on student evaluation in UK universities was prompted particularly by the Jarratt report on efficiency studies in 1985 (Stringer and Finlay 1993). As previously indicated, the customer was central in quality management systems and, despite problems with the term 'customer' as applied to higher education, it was generally accepted that students are regarded as the primary customer (Barnett 1992, Green 1993, Ellis 1993b, Goodlad 1995).

Harvey (2001) felt that student feedback had a crucial role to play in evaluating institutional performance, in that it provided a good indication of excellence on the one hand and sounded warning signals on the other. He believed that this valuable source of information had been under-exploited. On the basis of his research, Harvey identified a generic set of questions that occured in most institution-wide satisfaction surveys. This generic set dealt primarily with course organisation, the learning process, what students learn, and learning support. Harvey stated that it did not, and should not, include questions about teacher performance. In addition, in order to play an important role in the improvement process, Harvey stated that institutional satisfaction surveys would need to be tailored to the individual institution's requirements by augmenting the core questions with locally determined questions (Harvey 2001).

Drew (2001) talked to 263 students at Sheffield Hallam University and found that students' emphases were more on student need, rather than institutional provision. Drew questioned why, in course evaluations, students were not more often asked what helped them to learn, rather than for their views on provision (Drew 2001). *Learning from Audit* (1994) had also noted that some feedback questionnaires appeared to be designed to evaluate teaching rather than learning (HEQC 1994). In addition *Learning from Audit* stated that, in many universities, there was a lack of feedback to students on the outcomes of the questionnaires and any subsequent action. Auditors felt that this resulted in scepticism on the part of students in filling them in, and so contributed to poor return rates (HEQC 1994).

Student feedback was also obtained both informally, during discussions with tutors during classes and/or office hours, and formally by means of student representation on committees such as Staff/Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs). *Learning from Audit* noted a number of difficulties associated with the SSLC system, and suggested that many universities needed to operate their SSLCs in a more professional way. They commended practice where students were provided with training on what the student

representation posts entailed, and where training was followed up with a regular newsletter (HEQC 1994).

1.5.4 External Input to Quality Assurance

All universities have internal quality assurance procedures for the approval and periodic review of their courses. These may be augmented by, for example, accreditation, which provided an external assessment of the quality of the provision at the subject level. The duplication of effort needed to produce accreditation documentation, in addition to meeting Teaching Quality Assessment and Quality Audit requirements was a frequent complaint during the 'Quality Debate'. In addition, some higher education institutions and/or departments encouraged industrial input into their courses and/or approval and review procedures.

The key mechanism for ensuring comparability and the maintenance of standards in UK higher education, however, was the external examiner system. The external examiner system in its more modern sense began in 1880, and by the mid-1990s the system was a long-established component of higher education (Silver 1994). The system came under strain, however, in response to expansion, modularisation, semesterisation, developments in patterns of assessing students and the introduction of new forms of quality assurance systems. There were increasing complaints from external examiners about workload and the level of remuneration.

In addition, particularly from the 1970s, doubts were being expressed about the reliability of the assessment of the comparability of standards across institutions and subjects. The functions and expectations of external examiners and their ability to contribute meaningfully have, thus, been questioned (Silver 1994). Previous models of good practice, therefore, needed to be reviewed with a view to updating the system to reflect the new larger and more diverse higher education sector. With this in mind, the HEQC commissioned an evaluation of the system in 1994 by the QSC. The authors of the resulting report concluded that, despite concerns about the ability of the system to cope with mass higher education and modularisation, there was widespread approval of the contribution made by external examiners, and support for the system to continue (Silver et al 1995). Silver et al made a number of recommendations with respect to clarifying the purposes and roles of external examining, and strengthening the system 'in whatever ways are necessary for it to operate effectively in the future' (Silver et al 1995:91).

Following the QSC (1994) report, critics increasingly believed that the principle of external examining was being applied so inconsistently that it could no longer be assumed to be an effective safeguard of quality (Utley 2002). During 2002, therefore, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) began to further explore confidence in the system, and to re-examine its code of practice.

1.6 Sociological Studies of Higher Education

Sociological studies of higher education have been undertaken by a number of authors. Themes included universities immediately post-Robbins (Halsey and Trow 1971) and polytechnics shortly after their introduction (Whitburn et al 1976). Ainley (1994) chose one former polytechnic and one university for his study of a comparison between the two, whilst Allan (1996) obtained personal views of a number of staff new to teaching. Becher (1989) chose a range of subject disciplines to 'map' in terms of their 'territories' and the academic 'tribes' that inhabited them. Evans (1988 and 1993) gained insights into specific disciplinary cultures i.e. Languages and English. Altbach (1994 and 1997) adopted a comparative approach, whereas Cuthbert (1996) included some categories of non-academic staff in his study on the 'work', the 'workers' and the 'work context' in higher education. It is unsurprising that contemporary discussions often relate to the subject of 'change' in higher education. Texts in this category include those by Trowler (1998) who looked at academics' responses to change inside one British university, and Taylor (1999) who took a broader look at change in higher education and in academics' work and work environments. A selection of these will be discussed in more detail because of their implications for this study.

Whilst Robbins concentrated on students and higher education provision and policy, attention was turned to the academics themselves in the first full scale study of the university teaching professions to appear in the United Kingdom. Halsey and Trow's (1971) work on the role of the university teacher in Britain began in 1963, and was set against the background of systematic higher educational expansion. The book was based on a survey and on historical analysis of British university traditions. It incorporated aspects such as the relationship between universities and society, the academic career, and academic orientations (teaching/research), and included attitudes to expansion. This sociological portrait of the academic profession questioned how elitist assumptions on which higher education up to Robbins was based, would adapt to developments towards mass higher education. Their study suggested that academics supported modest expansion of what was a highly selective system, but opposed the transformation of that system in the direction of mass higher education. This work was updated by two similar studies which were undertaken by Halsey in 1976 and 1989.

People in Polytechnics (Whitburn et al 1976) reported on the first national survey of polytechnic staff and students. It was undertaken by a research team from the Polytechnic of North London in 1970 to evaluate the results of the 'binary' policy. The polytechnics were created in 1966 to develop a role that in some ways would be distinctive from that traditionally associated with universities in terms of diversity of courses and extending educational opportunities. One of the objectives of the research was to ascertain the extent to which this had been achieved. It incorporated demographic profiles, plus views of both staff and students in polytechnics at the time. Whitburn et al (1976) concluded that the polytechnic sector was beginning to attain the objectives set in 1966, and was proving to be a very creditable sector of higher education.

Becher (1989) set about developing a theory of academic relations by examining disciplinary cultures. Effectively this meant mapping the territory of academic knowledge (the 'territories') and exploring the characteristics of those who inhabit it (the 'tribes'). The study involved 220 academics in 12 disciplines and 18 institutions in 2 countries. Becher's questions fell into 5 categories (i) characteristics of the discipline, (ii) epistomelogical issues, (iii) career patterns, (iv) reputations and rewards and (v) professional activity. A final set of questions explored academic's value systems. Becher chose 'reasonably prestigious' departments within each discipline. His interviews were 'designed to encourage reasonably open-ended discussion about professional issues, but not specifically about the academic's role as a teacher' (Becher 1989:3). Becher stated that his book 'straddled the little-explored border zone between the sociology of knowledge and social studies of science on the one hand, and the study of higher education on the other' (Becher 1989:6). Becher's study was updated in 2001 by Becher and Trowler (2001).

The Carnegie Survey (Boyer et al 1994) involved academic staff from universities, polytechnics and colleges, both research and non-research institutions, across four European countries. This questionnaire-based survey included permanent and non-permanent staff in research posts as well as teaching. There were three sets of questions: (i) working conditions (ii) professional activity including values and (iii) institutional governance. The survey concluded that there was a lower level of satisfaction in the UK, but despite the discontent and perceived deprofessionalisation, academics retained a set of attitudes and values which Fulton (1996), reporting on the survey, described as professional and collegial.

The International Academic Profession (Altbach 1997) was an extension of the 1994 Carnegie survey and involved approximately 20,000 academic staff across fourteen

countries between 1992-1993. The survey used a standardised questionnaire and included questions as to age, status, career, commitment to institution/discipline, attitudes to work and higher education as well as the position of higher education in society. The book included comparative and historical contexts, and drew national and international conclusions. Oliver Fulton wrote on academics in the UK. The findings showed that there were concerns about centralising tendencies, and the assessment of research and teaching. In summary the book stated that the international academic profession was characterised by rapid change and academics were unsettled, but there was also the continuing strength and allure of its values and community.

Cuthbert (1996) adopted a broader approach by examining the changing nature of higher education work, not only teaching and research work by academics, but also the growing role of others such as professional librarians and information scientists. This book also examined the context for higher education work, by looking at changing patterns of academic culture, professionalism and control. The text included an analysis of who were the workers in higher education, their patterns of employment and what motivated them. Keep et al (1996) explored the different ways in which people were engaged as workers in higher education, recent trends and their implications. They criticised management in higher education for its neglect of knowledge about human resources management. Fulton (1996) drew on data from the Carnegie Foundation's international survey to articulate different perspectives on academic work. Thorne and Cuthbert (1996) referred to the broader experience of reform in public services to consider major forces for change in higher education, the conflicting values which they represented and how those value conflicts were played out in the changing patterns of control in higher education.

1.7 Summary

The study involved reference to a diverse range of literature, which impacted on the central focus of the research, that is teaching in higher education.

The 'Quality Debate' in the Times Higher Education Supplement, following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment in the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act* was the original inspiration for the research. Quality as it applied to higher education could not be explored in isolation, however. The conceptual framework which guided the choice of literature, therefore, comprised an examination of 'quality', together with aspects of the external context, predominantly government policy and legislation on higher education, particularly that relating to teaching, explored with reference to the internal cultural environment of academia. The latter included the role

and nature of higher education, together with aspects of the academic profession including self-regulation i.e. autonomy and academic freedom, incorporating peer review. The theory relating to professionalisation in relation to university teaching was also examined. As the research involved a sociological study, it was also necessary to examine previous studies of this nature for comparison.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The 'Quality Debate', which commenced following the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), gave rise to a number of questions and issues relating to TQA and its impact on teaching, for discussion with academics at the 'chalkface'. The academics' perceptions of TQA could not be seen in isolation, however, without consideration of the context within which they operated. This research, therefore, focused on the academic's perceptions of their own personal orientations and aspirations with respect to teaching, but included their views on their institution's recognition of, and support for, teaching and the effectiveness of specific teaching quality assurance mechanisms. Finally their experiences of, and opinions on, various aspects of TQA and its effect on their teaching was studied.

A semi-structured interview was the chosen research approach for data generation in this phenomenologically-based study. The questions were written to reflect the areas of interest, the research approach taken, the proposed means of analysis and the sample selected. Issues such as data recording, data management and data analysis are also included within this chapter, together with discussions on validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. The chapter begins with a more detailed look at the phenomenological research tradition that informed the methodology.

2.1 Research Tradition

This study was informed by the phenomenological research tradition.
Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual. The point of view of the 'actor' (in this case the academic) in relation to the phenomena of experience of everyday life (e.g. teaching in higher education) is the central concern. The interpretation of the world in terms of its actors is a humanistic approach, which has interpretive and subjective dimensions, and utilises an inductive, qualitative rather than quantitative methodology. Interpretive research begins with individuals and seeks to understand their interpretations of the world around them. Theory is emergent, i.e. it does not precede research but follows it.

Cresswell (1998) identified five main research traditions i.e. biography, ethnography, case study, grounded theory and phenomenology, and differentiated between them in terms of their focus. In phenomenology the focus is the concept or phenomenon, whilst it is the life of the individual in the biographical tradition, the cultural group in ethnography, the case in a case study and the generation of theory in grounded theory. Phenomenological studies seek primarily to describe rather than explain, and the central focus is on understanding the concept or phenomenon without, necessarily, generating theory, thus distinguishing it from grounded theory.

Phenomenology has its origins in philosophy with the work of Husserl (1859 to 1938) and followers such as Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Kockelmans 1967). Alfred Schutz (1899 to 1959) created a phenomenological basis for the social sciences (Wilson 2002) and phenomenology has subsequently been used in the social and human sciences such as sociology, psychology, nursing and health sciences, and education. The aim of phenomenology as propounded by Husserl was to study human phenomena without considering questions as to their causes, their objective reality or even their appearances (Wilson 2002). It was the individuals' perceptions that coloured their social experiences and which, thus, became the central focus of interest. Phenomenology provides valuable insights because it is effective at surfacing deep issues and making voices heard (Lester 1999)

A key concept in phenomenology is intersubjectivity i.e. an individual's experience of the world upon which his/her thoughts are based is intersubjective because (s)he experiences the world with and through others. The social world is one that is shared with others on the basis of common knowledge (stocks) and procedures (recipes). Language allows individuals to 'typify' things and people in their environment by providing names and labels for them, thus enabling a reciprocity of perspectives. Whilst each person has unique biographical situations or 'stocks of knowledge', there is a store of common-sense knowledge through which individuals understand each other (Layder 1994). Husserl believed that typification was a key process in our sense-making about the world, and provides individuals with a means of identifying,

classifying and comparing modes of social action and interaction using defined criteria for the assignment of phenomena to type (Wilson 2002).

Individuals are, thus, engaged in an on-going process of making sense of the world in interaction with others, whilst the researcher is seeking to making sense of their sense-making. The aim of the researcher in this study was, therefore, to get as close as possible to what the participants i.e. the academics were experiencing. The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy is critical to gaining the required depth of information, and qualitative interviewing is widely used. At the same time, however, the researcher must assume the position of the disinterested observer. Whilst selecting those aspects of the situation that are appropriate for the objectives of the research, (s)he is required to put aside or 'bracket' any pre-conceptions in order to fully understand the experience of the participants and not impose an a priori hypothesis on the experience (Cresswell 1998). It was this approach that was adopted for the purposes of this research.

Pure phenomenological research according to Husserl (1970) seeks to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions. From individual descriptions, general or universal meanings i.e. the essences of structures of the experience, are subsequently derived (Cresswell 1998). Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, however, can enable it to be used as a basis for practical theory, allowing it to inform, support or challenge policy and action (Lester 1999).

2.2 The Interview Schedule

For this phenomenologically-based study, a semi-structured interview approach was chosen to elicit the data. The structured interview is one of the most frequently used methods of eliciting information in social and educational research (Cohen and Manion 1994:276) and is widely used in phenomenological research. This method would enable all of the areas of interest to be covered, provide a framework for analysis and enable the interviewees to expand on any aspect and introduce their own thoughts and ideas. It would also allow for more flexibility in asking as well as

answering questions and enable both interviewer and interviewee to clarify potential misinterpretations. It was hoped that the personal interaction would help in gaining the interviewee's confidence and that they would, thus, give more open and honest responses. This personal interaction, however, could also be the source of one of the disadvantages of the interview method i.e. the potential subjectivity and bias on behalf of the interviewer (Cohen and Manion 1994). This would particularly be an issue where there was only one interviewer, as in this study, since all interviews would be subject to the same bias rather than a range of them. This potential problem had to be borne in mind during interviewing and subsequent analysis in order to maintain the validity of the data.

The alternative option of a questionnaire was not adopted partially because of the limitations in its ability to elicit information on values, attitudes and beliefs rather than just facts, and also because of a potential poor response rate. From personal experience, I was aware that academics would be more likely to discard a questionnaire than respond to a personal approach for information. A questionnaire could be more reliable because it would be anonymous and so academics might be more inclined to give honest responses. It would also have been more economical to administer, but the questions would have been more difficult to formulate in order to avoid misinterpretations. The interview could have been complemented by a questionnaire, particularly for the basic factual and/or contextual data.

Three main types of questions or 'items' (Kerlinger and Lee 2000) could be included in the construction of a schedule for a structured research interview:

- 'Fixed-alternative' items (also called closed or poll questions) where the respondent would select from one or more alternatives. These have the advantage of facilitating analysis and greater reliability, but could lead to superficiality. In the interview schedule, these were mixed with open-ended questions and used as a guide to the range of potential responses, rather than forcing the interviewees to chose what they might consider to be an inappropriate answer.
- 'Open-ended' items which supply a frame of reference whilst allowing the minimum restraint on answers. These should help the interviewee to establish a

rapport, allow him/her to probe and make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believed. A particular type of open-ended question, the 'funnel', would start with a broad question and narrow down to more specific ones. Open-ended items predominated in the interview schedule.

- 'Scale' is a set of verbal items to which the interviewee indicates degrees of agreement or disagreement i.e. there is a scale of fixed alternatives. This was not used to any extent in the interview schedule in the study.

The format of the questions also needed to be considered. Tuckman (1994) lists four main formats:

- Direct or indirect format. Tuckman suggested that the indirect approach was more likely to produce frank and open responses, though it might take a greater number of indirect questions to collect the information relevant to a single point.
- Nonspecific (general) or specific issues. As with direct/indirect, Tuckman believed that specific questions might cause a respondent to be more cautious or guarded whilst the non-specific questions could lead circuitously to the desired information but with less alarm.
- Factual answers or opinions. Both do not necessarily lead to truthful answers, since distortions based on social desirability could occur, though inaccuracy and bias can be minimised by careful structuring of the questions.
- Question or statement e.g. a statement might be used in conjunction with a scale of fixed alternatives.

As Tuckman (1994) pointed out, just as questions could differ in format, so could responses. For the most part, the interview schedule invited an 'unstructured response' in which there was the freedom to give an answer as the respondent chose. The main disadvantage of this type of response would be the subsequent difficulty involved in coding and quantifying the data. The 'fill-in response' would require an interviewee to supply e.g. factual information, rather than chose a response. The response would often be limited to a word or phrase. Respondents were also asked for a 'ranking response' in which they would rank-order a series of phrases. The 'checklist response' mode was also used for some questions, with respondents

selecting one of several alternatives presented to them, though these were not adhered to rigidly if none of the alternatives seemed appropriate to the interviewee. The 'tabular', 'scaled' and 'categorical' response modes were not used.

All of the areas of interest for the study were identified following the examination of the literature, and translated into questions, bearing in mind question format and response mode. The interview schedule was organised into four main sections, which provided structure and flow to the interview. This structure would assist the subsequent analysis of the material. The research interview used in the study, therefore, was based predominantly on open-ended questions in an otherwise structured interview schedule.

The four main sections included questions covering:

- Nature and purpose of higher education and the academics' teaching and/or research role with reference to the institutional culture and mission.
- The institution's quality assurance framework for assuring course quality including quality management initiatives such as Total Quality Management (TQM), BS 9001, and Investors in People (IIP)
- The means by which the institution and academic ensured teaching effectiveness e.g. recruitment appraisal and staff development procedures, plus student feedback mechanisms
- Academics' experience and perception of the Teaching Quality Assessment process

A final question was included under which interviewees could discuss any other aspect, or expand on or clarify something previously touched upon during the main body of the interview itself.

The Interview Schedule

Basic Information on Individual Academic.

Name:

Department/School:

University:

Qualifications: (what and from where)

Experience and Background:

Current Status: (lecturer, convenor, chair etc)

Section 1.

* What do you regard are the primary purposes of Higher Education? Should education be *in* the subject or *through* the subject?

* Within the University does teaching have a high profile? Is the ability to generate publications perceived to be more important than teaching excellence?

* Is your natural orientation more towards excellence in teaching or research? Has this changed throughout your career?

* Is your primary academic loyalty to your subject discipline, the insitution, the department or your students? Can you rank these?

Section 2.

* What promotes curricular development? What balance is there between a top-down and a bottom-up approach? How does the institution encourage the involvement of the academic in course validation, monitoring and review?

* What teaching/learning methods initiatives have been promoted a) university-wide and b) within the department? Is research into teaching methods encouraged?

* Are you able to give examples of where central quality assurance/management initiatives committees and/or procedures work with and benefit the department e.g. TQM, BS5750, ISO 9001 and/or IIP.

* To what degree is there external involvement in curricular design, development validation and review? How effective is peer review?

Section 3

* What is your teaching background? Have you any teaching qualifications and do you think that this is essential/desirable/not necessary for a) credibility and b) professional status? How does this fit in with the view of the institution? (What recommendations would you make to new academics on this subject?)

* What have been your experiences with respect to the institution's recruitment, induction, mentoring and appraisal procedures and training and staff development opportunities? What are the promotion criteria, availability of sabbaticals and what are these used for? Are there rewards and incentives for improvement of teaching quality?

* Do you routinely encourage student evaluation of your teaching? Formative or summative? How is student feedback obtained? Give an example of where student views have precipitated change. What are your timetabled teaching hours?

* To what degree is there a culture of collaboration within and between departments and between the centre and the departments? How is this demonstrated?

Section 4

* Describe your participation in the recent Quality Assessment process e.g. preparation of self assessment, production of departmental information, assessment of teaching, nomination as an Assessor.

* Describe your experience of the process including the involvement of the centre, the conduct of the assessment visit (if any) and outcomes (costs/benefits). Has the introduction of Quality Assessment led to an increased self-critical evaluation of your own teaching? Can teaching quality be assessed?

* To what degree has the centre kept you aware of the (proposed) changes to the Quality Assessment Procedure, in preparation for future visits? What are your views (if any) on the proposed changes?

* Is the introduction of Quality Assessment a) an infringement of academic freedom and institutional autonomy b) encouraging a 'compliance culture' c) undermining professionalism and self-respect?

Any other views?

The schedule was designed so that the interview should take no more than one hour. This would allow enough time for a fairly in-depth interview and fit in with the academic timetable, without encroaching too much on the academic's time. In practice the interviews lasted on average about 50 minutes, but ranged from 35 to 90 minutes in length.

The interview schedule was piloted on two Business School academics. Adjustments were made both to the method of questioning and recording of interviews in the light of the pilot interviews. Few, if any, changes were made during the sample interviews, though as the interviews progressed, it became apparent that the responses to the questions on the institution's quality assurance framework indicated a high degree of repetition. The information collected under this section, therefore, tended to provide material for context purposes only.

2.3 Interview Sample

The interview sample was to include academics from both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. In order to research the perceptions of academics to Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), the subject disciplines chosen had to have been assessed under TQA i.e. between 1992 and 1995. TQA at this time did not involve universal visiting, hence it was possible that some of the departments in the study had not been assessed by way of a visit, but they would all have been involved in TQA to some degree because of the necessity of preparing the self-assessment.

Two departments and four institutions were chosen for the study. The four institutions included two pre-1992 and two post-1992 universities chosen for (a) convenience of location and (b) presence of the chosen departments. One of the pre-1992 universities was a former College of Advanced Technology, which had experimented with Total Quality Management (TQM), whilst one of the post-1992 institutions had adopted ISO 9001 as their quality management system. The presence of explicit quality management systems such as these was regarded as adding another dimension to the research. All of the institutions were originally established as institutions of higher education in the 1960s, though the CATs and former Polytechnics existed as colleges prior to this time. There were contacts in all four to assist with negotiating access to individual academics.

The two subject areas chosen were Computer Science/Studies and Business and Management. Both of these had some similarities in that they were both relatively

new university subjects with buoyant admissions and good employment prospects. They both comprised a number of diverse subjects and had a vocational or applied bias, in that a high proportion of their graduates used their degree directly in their subsequent employment. The major difference between them was that one was classified as a science, whilst the other was a social science. Science-based professions such as Computer Science would be categorised as a 'hard-applied' discipline, whilst Business and Management, in common with social professions, would incorporate more 'soft-applied' knowledge fields (Becher 1989). It was felt that the views of Business School academics teaching quality management principles could be particularly interesting.

As stated, the subject disciplines chosen had to include those that had been assessed under the TQA methodology. Between February 1993 and June 1995 provision in 15 subjects or 'units of assessment' were assessed. The choice of subject disciplines also had to reflect those disciplines that were taught in all of the four selected institutions. This reduced the choice of disciplinary areas to Chemistry, Sociology, some languages and English as well as Business and Management and Computer Science/Studies. Originally, the study hoped to incorporate a science, a social science and a humanities discipline but the practicalities of this, in terms of numbers of interviews involved, was prohibitive. Hence the choice was limited to one science and one social science discipline. As an administrator in Computer Science and a former lecturer in Business Studies in Further Education, I had a personal affinity for, and interest in, both of these subject areas. In addition both of these subject disciplines were not regarded as 'traditional' academic subjects and so had been involved in few, if any, previous research studies. For example, Becher (1989) did not include either in his mapping of academic 'territories'. It was felt, therefore, that a study incorporating these disciplines could contribute to the literature on academic life in general, in addition to its specific focus on the impact of TQA on teaching.

The aim was to interview approximately ten per cent of the staff in each of the Departments including one senior and one more junior (to teaching) member of each constituent group or division. This quota sampling approach could not be adhered to strictly due to the difficulties associated with negotiating access, but for the most part

a representative, or perhaps more accurately, an illustrative sample was obtained from each of the departments/groups. As Mason (1997) pointed out, in qualitative research statistical conventions to calculate the probability that patterns observed in the sample would exist in the wider population were rarely employed. Instead a non-probability sample might be selected to encapsulate a relevant range of units in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent it directly (Mason 1997).

Two of the Computer Science departments included a Mathematics division (which had not been assessed under TQA) whilst one was associated more strongly with Electronic Engineering. In order to achieve some comparability between institutions, the interview sample did not include academics from either of these disciplines. Similarly Economics as a discipline was included within the Business and Management Schools in some institutions, whilst in others it was a separate department, Hence academics in this discipline were also excluded from the interview sample.

Negotiating access was often difficult, time consuming and disappointing. One Business School (post-1992 institution) made a managerial decision to deny access altogether after six weeks of negotiation. The reasons stated included:

- they were in flux and would shortly be starting preparations for the next Quality Assessment
- the case study approach meant that the institution would be identifiable,
- they were experiencing an overload of people sending in questionnaires for completion and
- the subject of 'quality' was rather sensitive.

Despite attempted reassurances that:

- the focus was more on teaching rather than quality per se and
- the analysis would be on the basis of themes and aimed to ensure that no institution or individual could be recognised

the School was not prepared to change its mind, and so had to be omitted from the study.

The Computer Science department in this institution were only too willing to help, partly because the Head of Department was an Assessor for TQA and was enthusiastic to discuss aspects of the process. One Department of Computer Science (pre-1992 university) initially ignored my request to interview staff, though eventually agreed after receiving a second request in which was stated that the Business School in their institution had kindly allowed interviewing of their staff.

Meetings were arranged with the contacts in each institution, and in some instances, the contacts formed part of the interview sample and/or provided background information. The contacts facilitated access to the academics by advising on names of academic staff whom they thought would be interested in helping with the research, either with or without prior consultation with the academic staff concerned. In most cases interview arrangements were made directly with individual academics. Two departments, however, gave a date when all of the identified interviewees could be available, and so it was only necessary to arrange mutually convenient times. In one instance, in order to make up the required interview sample in one department, it was necessary to contact additional staff relatively 'blind' from a staff list. The vast majority of the sample were, however, identified by means of the original contact who effectively chose the academics based on their knowledge of them in relation to the presented objectives of the study.

The interview sample included:

	Business School	**Computer Science**
Institution 'A' (pre-1992)	9	3
Institution 'B' (pre-1992)	14 (including 2 pilot interviews)	3
Institution 'C' (post-1992)	7	6
Institution 'D' (post-1992)	0	4
Total	30	16

Not all of those interviewed were used in the analysis because:

(i) pilot interviews were excluded

(ii) incomplete/incoherent interviews due to faulty recording

(iii) concerns of one academic to do with anonymity

(iv) one academic interviewed was in a Mathematics Division

The sample used in the analysis included:

	Business School	Computer Science
Institution 'A'	8	3
Institution 'B'	9	2
Institution 'C'	6	5
Institution 'D'	0	3
Total	23	13

For the most part, after initial reservations, mostly time related, all of the Departments that contributed to the study gave their time freely and were extremely helpful.

2.4 Data Generation and Recording

Mason (1997) stated that it was more accurate to speak of generating data rather than collecting it, because the researcher could not be a completely neutral collector of information about the social world.

> 'Instead, the researcher is seen as actively constructing knowledge about that world according to certain principles and using certain methods derived from their epistemological position' (Mason 1997:36).

This implied, therefore, that it was important to decide on the best method for generating data from the chosen data sources, rather than regarding it as a collectable form.

The purpose of the research and method for data generation was outlined to the academics during the negotiation of access. Dates were agreed for the interviews, which took place in all but one instance in the offices of the interviewees. At the start of the interview, the purpose of the research was re-iterated, and a brief explanation was given as to the nature and content of the interview schedule and the proposed method of analysis i.e. on the basis of themes rather than cases. A brief resume of the

background and experience of the interviewer, as a former lecturer in further education and now an administrator in higher education, was also given. It was felt that the teaching plus higher education experience was valuable in terms of establishing a rapport. The fact that the research was for a PhD was also helpful, particularly in the Business Schools who were used to supporting their PhD students using qualitative research methodology. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and the interviewee's permission was requested, and in every case granted, for recording the interview. Respondents were advised that transcriptions would be forwarded to them so that they could check that it accurately reflected their views.

All of the interviews were recorded using audio equipment provided by the University of Warwick Audio-Visual Unit. This provided good recordings for the most part. Additional microphones were available but, in the attempt to make the equipment intrude as little as possible, these were rarely used. The recorder was placed in the best position that the interview location would allow, but this meant that, occasionally, there was not optimum sound quality. The tape recorders were rather large and heavy in use and it would have been preferable to have had access to lighter more portable models. Some 'accidents' did occur during the recordings, usually during the early stages of the interviewing process. On one occasion, the tape was turned over at the end of 45 minutes (all tapes had 90 minutes of recording time) and only the 'play' button was engaged. The last 10 minutes of the interview were, thus, not recorded and no notes were taken. The interviewee added notes for this section of the interview on the transcription, before returning it.

The Audio-Visual Unit had only one transcriber suitable for the tapes used in their recorders, hence some of the transcriptions had to be completed using the original recorders, which were far less efficient for this purpose. Transcriptions were completed verbatim, as far as possible. Reference to non-verbal communication was not included, unless it was felt to be significant e.g. if an interviewee paused for some time before answering a question. If a word or phrase was not comprehensible, a space was left and interviewees were asked to fill in any gaps if they were able, or felt it necessary, to do so in order to make sense of the text. The transcriptions were forwarded to interviewees with a note asking them to make any amendments that

were necessary, to ensure that the transcription accurately reflected their views. The majority made no comment on receiving the transcriptions. One returned her transcription with the grammar corrected, rather than making any amendments to the substance of the text. Another felt that her comments, if taken out of context, could be misleading and she was apprehensive about being identified from the text. She requested a copy of the tape but on receiving it made no further comment. A few made minor adjustments, whilst others merely acknowledged receipt of the transcription and sent their best wishes for the research. A note was sent to all interviewees thanking them for sparing their valuable time, either by email the day following the interview and/or by a letter sent with the transcription.

Transcribing was very time consuming and took approximately five hours for each one-hour interview. It was also not always possible to determine exactly what was said and so the meaning of some of the sentences was lost. Having an almost entire record of the interview which one could go back to time and again was, however, very useful, and provided some interesting views articulated in the interviewees' own words. Recording the interview also had the advantage of enabling the interviewer to concentrate on the questions and answers without the distraction of taking notes. Despite the disadvantages, including the subsequent difficulties in data management and analysis arising from recording and transcribing, this was regarded as the best approach in the circumstances.

The interviews took place over a period of two years from May 1996 to April 1998. The reason for this long time period for completion of interviews was because:

- the time limitations of combining part-time study with full-time employment, which made no time allowances to assist the research.
- difficulties in negotiating access at mutually convenient times.
- the time taken to complete the transcriptions as soon as possible after each interview.

The long time frame did not appear to have a significant impact on the results of the interviews i.e. those interviewed later did not seem to be more aware of the assessment process and its successor, Subject Review.

The order with respect to the departments concerned was as follows:

(i) Institution 'B' Business School, May to June 1996

(ii) Institution 'D' Computer Science, November 1996

(iii) Institution 'C' Computer Science, February to March 1997

(iv) Institution 'C' Business School, June 1997

(v) Institution 'B' Computer Science, October to November 1997

(vi) Institution 'A' Business School, January to February 1998

(vii) Institution 'A' Computer Science, April 1998

The interviews were transcribed in the periods between interviewing, and not left until the end of all of the interviews. At this stage the interviews would still be fairly fresh in mind and this would assist the transcription process. It also enabled early feedback of transcriptions to interviewees.

2.5 Data Management and Analysis

2.5.1 Use of Computer Software

In view of the relatively large number of lengthy interview transcripts that resulted from the study, the use of a software programme was investigated to aid the management of the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) provided a table of program characteristics to aid choice of software. The main criteria were that the programme had to be compatible with Apple Macintosh computers, be user friendly and be designed predominately for coding and search and retrieval. The incorporation of a facility for theory building would be an added benefit. The software chosen was Q.S.R NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising) version 4.0. NUD*IST provides an environment for storing and exploring data and ideas, linking ideas, constructing and testing theories about the data and

generating reports including, if necessary, statistical summaries. NUD*IST handles data in the form of text but can also handle non-textual records for example photographs, films, maps and musical scores. It was anticipated that the time spent becoming familiarised with the software, would repay in terms of enabling procedures to be more systematic, reducing drudgery and aiding flexibility of data management and analysis.

I was given the names of two members of staff at the University of Warwick who had some, though limited practical experience of, and expertise in, the use of NUD*IST. One was enthusiastic to help and referred me to web-sites and training courses. It was hoped that he would go on a training course and then develop a course within the institution, but this did not materialise. The second member of staff was an academic who used NUD*IST for data management only. He was, therefore, familiar with the basic functions and the application of NUD*IST to actual research data, which he was willing to demonstrate to me. NUD*IST was the qualitative software programme of choice within the institution generally, but there was no central practical support for it, hence there seemed to be limited use and expertise. No software licence was available for my use, but the programme was relatively modest in price and a copy was acquired and installed on my Apple Macintosh machine. The software came with a comprehensive user guide and an in-built tutorial package, which provided the principle means of familiarisation with the programme. In order to use NUD*IST at home, the software was installed on my home machine and copies of updates of the various stages of coding and analysis were transferred between home and work computer by means of a zip disc. It was very important, therefore, to be systematic in backing up work and keeping both home and work computers up to date.

NUD*IST comprises two sub-systems, the Document System and the Index System. The Document System enables the listing, storage and retrieval of documents, the storage and display of information about documents, the ability to edit text in the documents and to browse and investigate them as required. Analysis of data documents is enabled by facilities for adding and coding annotations, coding segments of text at nodes, writing and editing memos, searching for words or string of characters and creating reports on the text of a document or on the document system

itself. The Index System is made up of nodes, which facilitate the coding of documents and storage of ideas. The nodes may be 'free nodes' or structured in a hierarchical index tree. The nodes can be listed with definitions of, and information about, the coding. The Index System allows for browsing of nodes, coding and re-coding, spreading to a wider context and jumping to the original source in a document. The Index System can also be searched for combination of coding and reports can be prepared on any node or text coded at it. NUD*IST, thus, allows great flexibility in the storage, coding and retrieval of text, thus greatly assisting data management.

2.5.2 Coding or Indexing

All of the transcriptions were originally in Microsoft Word format. Prior to importing the documents into NUD*IST, they had to be broken down into text units of an appropriate length for coding, and then saved in plain text format. The text unit is the smallest portion of a document which can be coded, and is marked in NUD*IST by hard returns. For lengthy interviews such as those in the study, short paragraphs were regarded as more appropriate as text units than single sentences. Sub-headers, which are marked with an initial asterisk before a document is imported into NUD*IST, divide the document into sections. The questions used in the interview schedule formed the sub-headings, each being followed in the documents by their related text units. Each transcription, therefore, had to be re-read and the sections and text units identified and formatted. This process also enabled the researcher to gain familiarity with the material and start to identify key ideas and recurrent themes in the data. At this stage, a selection was made of the transcriptions, since resources did not permit coding (or indexing) of all of the data generated. The selection aimed to ensure that the principles of the original research design was adhered to, as far as possible.

Ritchie and Spencer (in Bryman and Burgess 1994) used 'Framework' as an analytical approach for applied qualitative research. The key stages to qualitative data analysis involved in 'Framework' were:

- Familiarisation
- Identifying a thematic framework or index

- Indexing (or Coding)
- Charting and
- Mapping and Interpretation, at which stage the key objectives of qualitative data analysis were addressed.

Identification of the key concepts and themes leads to the thematic framework on which the data could be examined and referenced. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this stage as creating a provisional 'start list' of codes. In the study, the interview schedule itself provided the primary themes on which the initial Index Tree in NUD*IST could be formulated. There was flexibility, however for the Index Tree to be redesigned, as necessary during the life of the project, to express emerging ideas and theories.

Indexing refers to the process whereby the thematic framework or index is systematically applied to the data in its textual form (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). Mason (1994) also refers to 'indexing', but Miles and Huberman (1994) use the term 'coding'. They define codes as:

> 'tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:56).

Miles and Huberman emphasise that it is not the words themselves, but their meaning that matters.

Miles and Huberman (1994) identify three main types of codes:

- Descriptive codes for attributing a class of phenomena to a segment of text
- Interpretive codes and
- Pattern codes which are more inferential and explanatory

Typically, the initial thematic framework is often largely descriptive (Ritchie and Spencer 1994), but following application to the transcripts, the codes or categories are refined and become more responsive to emergent and analytical themes. For these

refinements it is necessary to look for conceptualisations which encapsulate and represent the diversity of experience, attitude, circumstance and so on (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

NUD*IST allows the organisation of codes at nodes in a hierarchical index tree, by which means the text relating to the codes can easily be retrieved. Nodes can also be put in the Free Node area until ideas take shape to organise them into the tree structure. In addition, NUD*IST enables the multiple coding of text i.e. text can be coded at many nodes

The first node in the tree structure was assigned to base data, and was thus totally descriptive i.e.

Node 1	Base Data
Node 1 1	Base Data/Gender
Node 1 1 1	Base Data/Gender/Female
Node 1 1 2	Base Data/Gender/Male
Node 1 2	Base Data/Institution
Node 1 2 1	Base Data/Institution/ 'A'
Node 1 2 2	Base Data/Institution/ 'B'
Node 1 2 3	Base Data/Institution/ 'C'
Node 1 2 4	Base Data/Institution/ 'D'
Node 1 3	Base Data/Department
Node 1 3 1	Base Data/Department/Business and Management
Node 1 3 2	Base Data/Department/Computer Science

The initial tree structure was developed along these lines with reference to the list of research questions. The first version of the index or thematic framework was applied to a few transcripts, and the codes subsequently refined. Subsequently, coding was systematically applied to all of the data, becoming increasingly interpretative in nature as individual views, aspirations and motivations emerged. NUD*IST allowed the modification of coding during this process including altering, deleting, shifting, copying, and/or merging of codes.

2.5.3 Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) define analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity:

- Data reduction which involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data. This occurs continuously throughout the life of a qualitative data project. Coding forms part of data analysis and is followed by teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions and writing memos.
- Data display which involves organising and compressing an assembly of information which permits conclusion drawing and action. Matrices, graphs, charts and networks are recommended to assemble organised information into an immediately accessible compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening.
- Conclusion/drawing verification i.e. noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions.

In the study, the systematic affixing of codes was followed by an examination of the themes arising. NUD*IST facilitates the listing of nodes from which the main themes could be ascertained. An overview of the themes enabled experimentation with the overall structure of the thesis. The interview schedule provided an initial structure, but following coding and the subsequent teasing out of themes, the proposed structure was re-examined to establish its suitability. Broadly, however, following minor adjustments, text from each of the four sections of the interview schedule was assigned to an individual chapter in the thesis.

Chapter headings and sub-headings were determined following extraction of the major themes, resulting from the use of the interview schedule. Due to lack of expertise in the use of NUD*IST, the subsequent analysis was completed using the manual techniques described, though NUD*IST was of benefit in terms of ease of text retrieval and referral back to the original source to confirm context where necessary. The nodes relating to each sub-heading in the thesis were identified, and the text coded at these nodes was examined systematically. Taking each

heading/sub-heading at a time, the coded text appropriate to the heading/sub-heading was extracted into a word document and referenced by respondent and the number of the text unit in which it appeared. The text was also grouped in terms of responses from each institution and department. NUD*IST does not permit cut and paste and, hence, due to lack of experience and expertise, this resulted in a high proportion of re-typing. There was a degree of selectivity and data reduction at this stage, however, since several codes were often assigned to a particular text unit and it was only necessary to extract the appropriate text for each heading/sub-heading. The process was, however, very time consuming, though it did enable additional familiarisation with the text, this time on a theme rather than a case basis.

The data for one chapter was predominantly base data and/or responses to fixed-alternative questions and these lent themselves particularly well to the use of tables and matrices. For example, interviewees were asked whether their primary academic loyalty was to their students, subject, institution or department. It was important both to enable accessibility of themes across as well as between cases, and hence a matrix display format was used. The columns were headed 'student', 'subject', 'institution', 'department' and 'other'. The rows comprised each of the respondents arranged by institution and department. The relevant text was extracted from that assigned to the appropriate sub-heading, after further distillation and rationalisation. It was important that the simplification of the text did not result in loss or distortion of meaning.

Example of the use of a matrix for data display

Students	Subject	School	Institution	Other
Primarily my loyalty should be with the students because I'm responsible for the quality of their education. That's where the buck stops. (A/BS/Br)		The School would be a higher priority than the Marketing Group although my loyalties very much in terms of my research and teaching would be with the Marketing Group		I suppose it is all of those four categories.
I'd probably say my students. When I teach I'm trying to get the students well into the learning process. Hopefully they'll go out better prepared for the jobs that will be going (A/BS/Co)				I'd say the other ones would be equal but lower definitely than the students. They'd be quite a bit higher .

	Probably my subject discipline. I'm not sure they're exclusive. Ultimately my view of being an academic is that it doesn't matter which institution you are in to a large extent (except) in the sense that that institution will give you a certain image. So its quite transferable where I would go. Its the subject that I'm interested in, that drives me rather than the institutions that I',m working for. And the students to me are part of that institution (A/BS/Ro)			I'm not in a Group which particularly supports what I do. They're not un-supportive but you know they're not like-minded. I don't suppose if I went to another institution I would find other people who would be. It tends to be a sort of job where you are very much on your own.

The accessibility of the meaning within the text was much improved by the use of this data display and further analysis was facilitated. An initial quick scan or 'squint analysis' (Miles and Huberman 1994) enables the researcher to see what, if anything, catches the attention. The text was now examined more systematically to isolate and identify patterns, relationships, similarities and differences. For instance, respondents who stated that students were their prime academic loyalty might give similar or different reasons. They might qualify the response by stating that they had a loyalty to all four. They might give a negative response with a reason why students were not their prime loyalty. The responses were, thus, grouped as far as possible in order to further facilitate accessibility and enable the production of sets of generalisations and conclusions. During all of these stages, it was necessary to stay in touch with the data, but also to establish some objectivity by means of the use of systematic procedures. It was also important to return regularly to the original data to check context with a view to ensuring a valid interpretation of meaning.

Some of the data did not lend itself as well to a table or matrix display. In these cases, the text originally collected under each heading/sub-heading was examined and further simplified and rationalised. This resulted in a list of phrases or sentences for each respondent grouped by department/institution. The reduced and concentrated text was then examined in the same way as other data displays, for patterns, comparisons, contrasts and clustering. Some counting was used particularly for the base data. Conclusions were formulated, checked against original transcript data, re-formulated and explained. The analysis was on the basis of themes rather than cases, though it was important to keep each case in mind in order not to distort meaning. Few formal memos were written, but mental memos had been kept and the original tapes were available to establish how the information was given, rather than

just what was said. Coherent explanations and interpretations were made following descriptive summations, and the results were compared and contrasted with the appropriate literature.

2.6 Reliability and Validity

The interview as a method allows for greater depth in the data generated but it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of both the interviewer and the respondent. Kirk and Miller (1990) state that the objectivity of qualitative research is evaluated in terms of the reliability and validity of its observations.

> 'Objectivity is the simultaneous realisation of as much reliability and validity as possible' (Kirk and Miller 1990:20).

Reliability is described as the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out. Validity is the extent to which it gives the correct answer i.e. is interpreted in the correct way or, in the case of this study represents the informant's subjective reality. It is possible to obtain perfect reliability with no validity at all. Perfect validity would assure perfect reliability, but perfect validity is not even theoretically attainable (Kirk and Miller 1990).

According to Silverman (1994), the central methodological issue for interviews is the reliability of the interview schedule and the representativeness of the sample. Reliability is achieved through a number of means including pre-testing of the interview schedule, training of interviewers and the use of as many fixed-choice answers as possible. Silverman (1994) talks of 'authenticity' rather than reliability as being a key issue in relation to qualitative research i.e. the aim is to gather 'authentic' understanding of people's experiences and it is believed that open-ended questions are the most effective route. It is important, however, to ensure that each respondent understands the questions in the same way, and that the responses are coded without any possibility of uncertainty (Silverman 1994). Silverman (1994) states that recordings and transcripts, such as were used in this study, can offer a highly reliable record to which the researcher can return as (s)he develops new hypotheses.

The use of one interviewer in this study, might increase the reliability of the data, but could also increase the bias, which might have repercussions on the validity. Having a range of interviewers with different biases could, therefore, have been useful (Cohen and Manion 1994). This potential problem was borne in mind when conducting the interviews and care was taken to ensure that the questions were formulated so that their meaning was clear. At all times, the aim was to be aware of, and minimise, potential biases in order to avoid misrepresentation or distortion of the findings.

Cohen and Manion (1994:267) refer to Kitwood's critique of the interview as a research tool. Kitwood (1977) argues that where increased reliability of the interview is brought about by greater control of its elements, it is achieved at the cost of reduced validity. The main purpose of the interview, Kitwood explains is that people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves in an interpersonal encounter, and that the distinctly human element in the interview is necessary to its 'validity'. The more the interviewer becomes rational and detached, the less likely the respondents feel at ease and the more calculated the response is likely to be. In this conception of the interview, reliability and validity become 'redundant notions' since every interpersonal situation might be regarded as being valid (Kitwood 1977). It was important, therefore, that during the study attention was paid to striking a balance between establishing a good level of rapport and empathy while avoiding undue influence of the researcher.

Two forms of validation are suggested by Silverman (1994):

- Comparing different kinds of data and different methods, which is referred to as data triangulation.
- Taking one's findings back to the subjects being studied, known as respondent validation.

The interview schedule was pre-tested on three academics, who were not later included in the study, and amended in the light of the responses received. Transcriptions were forwarded to the interviewees to ensure that the data reflected their views. They were also able to return the transcriptions with amendments and/or notes for clarification if they wished. However, there was no guarantee that all

respondents actually read the transcriptions. On-going drafts of the findings were not taken back to the subjects because of practical considerations, particularly in view of the time delay between collecting the data and writing up the findings. Every attempt was made to ensure that respondents understood the questions in a similar way, though it was evident that misinterpretations could, and did, occur. For example, respondents sometimes confused Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) with their own internal quality management system, predominantly because they had little experience of the TQA process. This misinterpretation was obvious and was taken into account during coding and analysis.

In data reduction, concentration and interpretation, the use of grouping or clustering was employed in order to establish conclusions. The robustness and, thus, credibility, of the findings was assisted by the significant use of direct quotes. It was important not to omit results that did not match the patterns as this would reduce the reliability and validity of the study and have ethical implications. It was also necessary to return to the original transcripts frequently, in order to check out the context and confirm the findings. In this way misinterpretation and, consequently, misrepresentation could be minimised, thus ensuring that summaries of findings were faithful to the participants' views. Standing back from the data was as important at times as staying close to it, in order to allow clarification of ideas. Overall, transparency and a rigorous systematic approach were adopted to ensure authenticity, credibility and dependability of the findings.

Phenomenological approaches can be applied to single cases but in multiple participant research, such as this study, the strength of the inference which can be made increases rapidly once factors start to recur with more than one participant. It was essential, however, to be tentative in suggesting the extent to which factors found in individual cases could be applied to the population from which the participants in the study were drawn. The study could point to implications or ways forward but care was necessary to ensure that the interpretations and theories developed were not presented as more concrete that they actually were i.e. did not point to firm conclusions.

2.7 Ethical Issues

A number of theories about ethical issues in relation to research have been forwarded. Cohen and Manion (1994) discuss the 'costs/benefits ratio' i.e. the balance which a researcher should strike between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and the rights and values of their subjects potentially threatened by the research. Cohen and Manion describe this as a 'particularly thorny dilemma' (Cohen and Mannion 1994:347) and, along with informed consent, contributes to the 'bedrock of ethical procedure' (Cohen and Manion 1994:349).

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that reciprocity is far more important than informed consent, since respondents will try to protect themselves in a mistrusted relationship. In terms of benefits for respondents, Miles and Huberman (1994) list aspects such as participants are listened to, they might gain insight and it could improve their personal practice. In terms of this study, it was not possible for the researcher to ascertain fully what benefits respondents gained. In a number of instances, however, academics seemed grateful for the opportunity to reflect upon their teaching role. One interviewee stated that it was like 'counselling', whilst another commented that it had enabled her to clarify her own thoughts and ideas.

All respondents were fully informed of the purpose and nature of the study, and their role in it. As academics themselves, they were obviously competent of understanding the information given and making the decision as to whether to be involved or not. All involvement was voluntary i.e. there was no coercion or manipulation, and their consent to participate was freely given. Official permission was initially gained, as a matter of courtesy, from the institutions concerned before contacting the department and finally the individual respondents.

Respondents were also assured that any information given would be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and that they would have anonymity. They were informed that the analysis would be on the basis of themes rather than cases, which would facilitate anonymity. In a number of cases, the responses were rather critical of their parent institution, and it was important that any information could not be traced back to the

individual concerned. It was more difficult to preserve the anonymity of the institution since a brief description might make them recognisable. The institutions were, however, always referred to as 'A', 'B', 'C' or 'D' and never by their actual name.

The study was conducted carefully, thoughtfully and honestly with due respect for all respondents and the information provided. Some of the transcripts were omitted from the study for a variety of reasons, one of which was the lack of time resources to complete the coding. At no time was there deliberate deception of any description, but this, obviously, raised an ethical dilemma since these respondents had given their time, but the data provided would not be used. These participants were not informed of this fact, since it was felt that this would potentially be more disappointing to them. The process of interviewing them was, however, advantageous to the study and hopefully it would have had a reciprocal benefit to the participant, despite the lack of formal inclusion.

Throughout the research, I was fully aware of the obligations I had to the respondents, the institutions and departments and to the wider research community, to act with integrity and truth. At all times the focus was on the maximisation of benefits for all concerned, without intervention, harm or exploitation.

2.8 Summary

This study incorporated a qualitative methodology and was informed by the phenomenological research tradition. Phenomenology is the study of the experience of the concept or phenomenon from the perspective of the individual and without a prior hypothesis. A semi-structured interview was chosen to generate the data, since it was felt that this would be best suited to the interview sample and the data required. The majority of the questions were open-ended, enabling all of the areas of interest to be covered, but allowing the necessary flexibility of response. The questions were organised into four main sections, which facilitated the flow of the interview and aided analysis by broadly mapping onto the four 'findings' chapters of the thesis.

The interview sample comprised approximately ten per cent of the academics in two departments (Computer Science and Business and Management) from four institutions (two pre-1992 and two post-1992). One post-1992 Business School refused to participate. The departments chosen were both assessed under the original Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) procedure, which operated between 1992 and 1995. A total of thirty Business School and sixteen Computer Science academics were interviewed between May 1996 and April 1998. Of these, twenty-three Business School and thirteen Computer Science interviews were selected for analysis. The interviews were fully recorded and transcribed; all transcriptions being forwarded to interviewees to ensure the accuracy of the data.

In view of the number of interview transcripts which resulted from the study, the use of a software programme, Q.S.R NUD*IST version 4, was chosen to facilitate data management and analysis by allowing the efficient storage, coding and retrieval of text. Data analysis followed coding and used techniques for data reduction and display, culminating in the drawing of conclusions about the data. Throughout, it was important that steps were followed to ensure the reliability (or authenticity) and validity of the data. Ethical considerations included reciprocity, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring that the research was carried out with integrity and truth, and with due respect to all concerned.

Chapter 3: The Academics

This study focuses on academics' views on their teaching role in general, and the effects of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) on teaching in higher education, particularly in relation to teaching quality and academic professionalism. It is only pertinent at the beginning of this study, therefore, to establish who the interviewees were in terms of their qualifications, experience, values and aspirations.

Section 3.1 provided basic background data for the sample interviewed and also included the academics' reasons for entering the academic profession. The definition of 'quality' used in Teaching Quality Assessment was fitness-for-purpose. With this in mind, Section 3.2 started with an exploration of the academics' views on the purposes of higher education. In addition, status and reputation in academe is acknowledged as being based on research rather than teaching excellence. Hence it was also felt necessary in this section to explore the academics' personal orientations towards teaching and/or research. Section 3.2 concluded with a discussion on the opinions and perspectives of the academics with respect to academic loyalty. This related partially to their research/teaching orientation but also gave valuable insights into their perspectives on both the profession that they were in, and the institution that employed them.

3.1 Profile of Interviewees

A profile of interviewees was initially established. This incorporated their qualifications, status, and experience both in higher education and also any prior industrial experience. Interviewees were not asked their age. Information on social background and classification of their first degree were also excluded. Such questions were felt not to be relevant to the study and could also have been regarded by the respondents as intrusive. A questionnaire approach might have been useful for obtaining this type of factual data, but overall the interview method was thought to be more appropriate for the purposes of this study, and there was insufficient time to employ both.

In both the text and the tables, the institutions were identified as 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'; 'A' and 'B' being the pre-1992 and 'C' and 'D' the post-1992 universities. The Schools/Departments were identified as 'BS' for Business School and 'CS' for Computer Science.

3.1.1 Gender

Overall, the interview sample comprised 81% men and 19% women. Statistics produced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) indicated that there were approximately 21% female academics in comparable disciplinary groups in the UK overall (HESA 1996/97 and 1997/98). Whilst the proportion of female interviewees was 20% in the Business Studies discipline, only 8% of the Computer Science interviewees were females. The interview sample was not selected on the basis of representing the gender balance, but it is likely that the low proportion of female Computer Scientists does give an indication of the male:female distribution in the Computer Science discipline (see figures 3.1 and 3.2). This finding was borne out by HESA statistics for the years in question, in which there were 7% to 8% of female academics in the Engineering and Technology subject grouping, compared to 29% in Business and Social Studies (HESA 1996/97 and 1997/98).

Gender

		Male	Male %	Female	Female %
A	BS	7	88	1	12
A	CS	3	100	0	0
B	BS	6	67	3	33
B	CS	2	100	0	0
C	BS	4	67	2	33
C	CS	4	80	1	20
D	CS	3	100	0	0
Total		29	81	7	19

Figure 3.1

Gender by Sector and Discipline

	Male	Male %	Female	Female %
Pre-1992	18	82	4	18
Post-1992	11	79	3	21
Business Schools	17	74	6	20
Computer Science	12	92	1	8

Figure 3.2

3.1.2 Status

All four (11%) members of the Professoriate in the sample were in Business Schools in pre-1992 institutions. There were no Professors in the interview sample in post-1992 institutions, nor in the Computer Science departments in pre-1992 universities. HESA statistics reveal that at the time, approximately 11% to 12% of academics in both disciplinary groupings were in the professorial grade. The sample interviewed, therefore, had a higher proportion of staff in the professorial grade than the Business and Social Studies population as a whole and a significantly lower one than in the Engineering and Technology population (HESA 1996/97 and 1997/98). The smaller Computer Science sample might have contributed to the absence of professorial staff interviewed. There were no Readers in the interview sample (see Figure 3.3).

Status

Uni	Dept	Professor	Head of Division	SL/PL	L/SL	Teaching Fellow
A	BS	2	3	2	2	2
A	CS			0	4	
B	BS	2	3	1	3	1
B	CS				2	
C	BS		3	4	2	
C	CS			2	3	
D	CS		1	1	3	
	Tot	4	10*	10	19	3
	%	11%	28%	28%	53%	8%

Figure 3.3

* Heads of Division are also included, as appropriate, under 'Professor' or 'SL/PL'

Ten of the interviewees identified themselves as Heads of Division or Group. In post-1992 institutions, the Heads of Division were of Principal Lecturer grade. There were no Principal Lecturers in pre-1992 institutions because the grading structure was different. The grades were Lecturer A, Lecturer B, Senior Lecturer, Reader up to Professor in the pre-1992 universities. This mapped onto Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Principal Lecturer, Reader, up to Professor in the post-1992 institutions. Lecturer A to B was a continuous scale in pre-1992 institutions, as was Lecturer to Senior Lecturer in post-1992 institutions. The Principal Lecturer in a post-1992 university was, thus, equivalent to the Senior Lecturer in the pre-1992 institutions. A Head of Division in a pre-1992 university was, therefore, likely to be a Senior Lecturer or a Professor, rather than a Principal Lecturer. In the sample selected, there were three Heads of Division in both of the Business Schools in the pre-1992 universities. In each of these, two were professors and one a senior lecturer.

The Business Schools of the universities in the study were significantly larger than the Computer Science Departments, as was reflected in the size of the interview sample. Business Schools were, therefore, divided into smaller groupings with a Head of Division/ Group. Nine of the ten Heads of Division were from the Business Schools. The Head of Division in one of the Computer Science Departments (post-1992 institution) was Head of Subject in a combined Department of Computing and Mathematics.

The proportion of senior staff (Professors plus Senior Lecturers) in pre-1992 institutions, was 19% of the total interviewees. Similarly 19% of the total interview sample were senior staff, i.e. Principal Lecturers, in post-1992 institutions. Overall the proportion of Senior Lecturers plus Principal Lecturers was 28%, which compared with 22% to 25% from the HESA statistics (HESA 1996/97 and 1997/98).

The most usual grade was the Lecturer grade (equivalent to Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in post-1992 institutions), comprising 53% of the interviewees. This was broadly similar to the HESA statistics of 55% to 59% (HESA 1996/97 and 1997/98). There were three Teaching Fellows in the sample, all from pre-1992 Business Schools. The Teaching Fellows were members of staff who were completing a part-time PhD,

whilst also doing part-time teaching. This was a specific programme supported by a Research Council. Progression to a lectureship would be expected and four other interviewees (all B/BS) had obtained a lectureship following their Teaching Fellowship.

3.1.3 Academic Qualifications

As Halsey commented, the binary divide has now gone but there still 'is likely to remain an organised social differentiation of both staff and students in terms of social background and educational qualifications' (Halsey, 1992:4).

All of the thirty-six interviewees had a first degree, prior to which three of whom had gained a Higher National Diploma. One member of a post-1992 institution had commenced a career in primary school teaching with a three year Certificate of Education qualification, again prior to a first degree. This would indicate that the first degree was regarded as a prime entry qualification to the academic profession in the UK, in both pre-1992 and post-1992 institutions. This compared with a university survey conducted by Williams et al (1974) which showed that in 1969, 74% of staff in polytechnics and 94% of staff in the university sector had obtained a first degree. (Williams, Blackstone and Metcalf, 1974). All of the five Oxbridge first degrees were gained by academics in pre-1992 universities. The majority of interviewees had obtained their first degree from a pre-1992 university, with only four respondents gaining a 'polytechnic' degree (See figures 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6).

Twenty one of the academics also had a Masters qualification. This figure included four MBAs. It was interesting to note that Masters qualifications were more prevalent in Business Schools and in post-1992 institutions. This contrasted with PhD qualifications which were noted particularly in pre-1992 institutions and in Computer Science departments (see figure 3.5). This might indicate that depth of academic subject knowledge as demonstrated by a PhD, could be more important for credibility in Computer Science. Later in the chapter, we look at whether industrial experience had greater significance for the Business School academics, and/or academics in the post-1992 institutions.

Academic Qualifications

Uni	Dept	BA or BSc	HND	Masters	MBA	MPhil	PhD	PhD (to finish)	PgD	PgCert
A	BS	8	1	5			3	2	1	
A	CS	3					3		1	
B	BS	9		5	2		4	2		
B	CS	2					2			
C	BS	6	1	2	2	1			1	1
C	CS	5	1	4		1	2	1		
D	CS	3		1			1			
	Total	36	3	17	4	2	15	5	3	1
	%	100	8	47	11	6	42	14	8	3

Figure 3.4

Academic Qualifications by Sector and Discipline

	BA or BSc %	HND %	Masters %	MBA %	MPhil %	PhD %	PhD (to finish)	PgD %	PgCert %
Pre-1992	100	5	45	9	0	55	18	9	0
Post-1992	100	14	50	14	14	21	7	7	7
Business Schools	100	9	52	17	4	30	17	9	4
Computer Science	100	8	38	0	8	62	8	8	0

Figure 3.5

First Degree by University Sector

Uni	Dept	Oxbridge	London	Pre-1992	Post-1992	OU	Overseas
A	BS	2		4	1	1	
A	CS	1		1			1
B	BS	1	1	7			
B	CS	1		1			
C	BS		1	3	2		
C	CS			3	1	1	
D	CS		1	1			1
	Total	5	3	20	4	2	2
	%	14%	8%	55%	11%	6%	6%

Figure 3.6

Two of the interviewees, one in each department in a post-1992 institution, had an MPhil. Five interviewees, predominantly from Business Schools had a PhD in progress. In addition one interviewee in a post-1992 Business School had just applied to do a PhD. It was possible that the PhD was becoming increasingly significant, in

order to gain entry to academia, or to remain in it, particularly in pre-1992 institutions.

3.1.4 Teaching Qualifications

Six of the interviewees had a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) qualification. The proportion of staff with a PGCE was similar both in the Business Schools and in Computer Science. In terms of sector, however, more post-1992 interviewees had gained a PGCE. Taking all teaching qualifications into account, a higher proportion of staff in post-1992 institutions, particularly in Business Schools, compared to Computer Science departments, had gained a teaching qualification (see Figures 3.7 and 3.8).

Teaching Qualifications

Uni	Dept	PGCE	PG dip	Cert Ed FE & HE	Cert Ed primary	Training *
A	BS	1	1			1
A	CS					1
B	BS	1				
B	CS	1				1
C	BS	2		1	1	1
C	CS					2
D	CS	1				
Total		6	1	1	1	6
%		17	3	3	3	17

Figure 3.7

*No formal qualifications from training courses

Teaching Qualifications by Sector and Discipline

	PGCE %	PG dip %	Cert Ed FE & HE %	Cert Ed primary %	All %
Pre-1992	14	5	0	0	8
Post-1992	21	0	7	7	36
Business Schools	17	4	4	4	26
Computer Science	15	0	0	0	15

Figure 3.8

3.1.5 Professional Qualifications

Although professional qualifications were not examined comprehensively, six interviewees specified that they had professional status, including FIPD, Chartered Occupational Psychologist, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, Chartered Accountant (2) and Chartered Engineer. A higher proportion of interviewees from Business Schools, particularly in the post-1992 sector identified membership of a professional body (see figure 3.9).

Professional Qualifications

Uni	Dept	FIPD	Chartered Occ Psych	Char Inst of Management	Chartered Accountant	Chartered Engineer
A	BS		1		1	
A	CS					
B	BS					
B	CS					1
C	BS	1		1	1	
C	CS					
D	CS					
	Tot	1	1	1	2	1

Figure 3.9

3.1.6 Length of Time in Higher Education

The exact number of years that interviewees had been teaching in higher education was not established. Interviewees were, however, grouped into having been in academia for (a) less than 6 years (b) between 6 and 12 years (c) between 13 and 20 years and (d) greater than 20 years, time-frames.

There was a fairly equal proportion of interviewees in each of the four groups overall (see Figure 3.10).

Teaching Experience

Uni	Dept	< 6 years	6 - 12 years	13 – 20 years	>20 years	Retiring shortly
A	BS	3	1	0	4	1
A	CS	1		2		
B	BS	3	3	1	2	
B	CS	1	1			
C	BS		2	3	1	1
C	CS		1	3	1	
D	CS	1		1	1	1
	Tot	9	8	10	9	3
	%	25%	22%	28%	25%	8%

Figure 3.10

The distribution on the basis of sector and of subject discipline, however, did show some differences (see Figure 3.11). In particular the relatively high proportion of new staff in pre-1992 institutions in the sample compared to the post-1992 sector was of note. This may have arisen predominantly because of the Teaching Fellowship scheme in the pre-1992 Business Schools, which was aimed at attracting those new to teaching. Three in the 'under six years' group were Teaching Fellows and two more were former Teaching Fellows who had recently gained a Lectureship post. The academics who advised on who to approach for interview in their School might have regarded the Teaching Fellows as being particularly interested in assisting the study, which had an explicit 'teaching' focus, and so were more likely to select them as the part of the interview sample.

Teaching Experience
by Sector and Discipline

	< 6 years %	6 - 12 years %	13 – 20 years %	>20 years %	Retiring shortly %
Pre-1992	36	23	14	27	3
Post-1992	7	21	50	21	6
Business Schools	26	27	17	30	6
Computer Science	23	14	46	15	3

Figure 3.11

In addition, the sample in the post-1992 institutions showed a high proportion of staff in the 13-20 year teaching experience range, compared to the equivalent range in pre-1992 institutions. As the Carnegie Report concluded, the majority of faculty world-wide were male and middle aged (Boyer et al 1994), whilst HESA reported an average age for academic staff of 42 to 43 years (HESA 1996/97 and 1997/98). The sampling methodology comprised the inclusion of one 'junior' member of staff and one 'senior' member of staff in each department or division, together with additional staff as necessary to make up the 10% of population target for the sample. It would not be surprising, therefore, for the sample to show some polarity, though it might be expected that the sample from the two sectors would show a similar distribution. We could tentatively conclude, however, that the pre-1992 sector of higher education, appeared to be attracting more 'new blood' academic staff than post-1992 institutions. This was particularly noted in the Business Schools where there was the opportunity to offer Research Council supported Teaching Fellowships.

Professorial and other senior post-holders had the longest academic experience, as would be expected, whilst Teaching Fellows had the least (see Figure 3.12).

One interviewee in a pre-1992 institution had over twenty years higher education experience, but was still on the lecturer grade. This interviewee did not have a PhD or a strong research orientation, hence his promotion prospects would be limited in the institution in which he was employed (university 'B'). Two Heads of Division in Business Schools, one from each sector, had been teaching in higher education for less than twelve years, yet they had been promoted to a senior level.

Teaching Experience and Status

	<6 years	**6-12 years**	**13-20 years**	**>20 years**	**Retiring shortly**
Professor			1	3	1
SL/PL		2	3	5	2
Lecturer	6	6	6	1	
Teaching Fellow	3				
Total	9	8	10	9	3

Figure 3.12

The transition to a more senior post was more apparent in the '13-20 years' in higher education group, though the majority in this group (in a ratio of 2:1) were still on the Lecturer, or equivalent grade. Moreover, two-thirds of Lecturers in this group were from the post-1992 sector. This might provide some indication of poor promotion prospects particularly in the post-1992 sector (see Chapter 5).

3.1.7 Reasons for going into Higher Education Teaching

3.1.7.1 Having No Industrial Experience

All except one of the seven interviewees with no industrial experience were from pre-1992 universities (see Figure 3.13). It was interesting to note that 80% of interviewees from pre-1992 Computer Science departments had no industrial experience, whilst only 12% of the corresponding interviewees in Business Schools had none. As was noted earlier, Computer Science interviewees had a higher proportion of PhDs. It is possible that a PhD is regarded more highly than industrial experience for entry into Computer Science, particularly in pre-1992 institutions.

Industrial Experience

Uni	Dept	None	Before 1st degree	Between degree & teaching	Between degree and PhD/MBA	While doing PhD
A	BS	1	3	3	1	
A	CS	3				
B	BS	1		6	2	
B	CS	1			1	
C	BS		3	2	1	
C	CS		1	3		1
D	CS	1	1	1		
	Tot	7	8	15	5	1
	%	19%	22%	42%	14%	3%

Figure 3.13

It would not be unexpected for industrial experience to be required for entry into an academic post in the vocationally orientated former Polytechnics. The one academic without industrial experience in a post-1992 Computer Science department had a PhD prior to appointment. After he had completed his PhD he felt 'pushed' into teaching.

He originally undertook a research post, but did not like the instability of short-term research contracts.

Industrial Experience by Sector and Discipline

	None %	Before 1st degree %	Between degree & teaching %	Between degree and PhD/MBA %	While doing PhD %
Pre-1992	27	14	41	18	0
Post-1992	7	36	43	7	7
Business Schools	9	26	48	17	0
Computer Science	38	15	31	8	8

Figure 3.14

This issue of security in general, and tenure in particular, rather than the lure of the teaching itself, was also given by another interviewee, as the reason for moving from a research to a teaching post. This academic stated, however, that he now had more of a teaching than a research orientation. Natural progression from being a research student, or the 'line of least resistance', was given by one interviewee. For another it was the research and teaching 'package' that he sought rather than just the teaching per se. Only one interviewee stated that university teaching had been his specific career aim (see Figure 3.15).

Reasons for going into Teaching

Without Industrial Experience	**A BS**	**A CS**	**B BS**	**B CS**	**C BS**	**C CS**	**D CS**
Career aim/seemed natural	1	1					
After a PhD felt pushed into academia							1
Teaching and research package				1			
Tenure/Security/Family commitments			1				
With Industrial Experience							
Opportunity arose			1				
Opportunity arose/Career Change	1		3				1
Interest/Background in training					2	2	
Family in Education			2		1	1	
Spouse have easier time in academia			1				
Perceived as less pressurised					1		
Industry/Job collapsed					1		
No industrial job after MSc						1	
Security							1

See what academic life was about			1				
Bored with or outgrown job/Little scope	2				3		
Unfulfilled ambition							1
Call to be a teacher/Vocation	1						
Always assumed would go into teaching			1				
Didn't like secondary school teaching			1	1			
Wanted more 'people' involvement					1		
Always done some research	1						
Variety	1						
Enjoyed life as a student							1
Do MSc, MBA, PhD	1		3				
To finish PhD						1	
To become an academic via taking a PhD			1				

Figure 3.15

3.1.7.2 With Prior Industrial Experience

Two interviewees came from a family of school-teachers, though had not originally intended going into teaching themselves. One moved into Higher Education after gaining an interest in training in her job in industry. The other didn't enjoy her work in industry and when a Teaching Fellowship post was advertised, decided to 'give it a go' and 'see what academic life was about'.

A spouse being involved in teaching was specified by two interviewees. One of these moved first into teaching in Further Education, having become dissatisfied with his job in industry. The other aspired to an academic post because her spouse, who was in academia, seemed to be having an 'easier life' than she was. This perception of academic life as being attractive because it was less pressurised was echoed by another interviewee, although he acknowledged that academia was not as 'civilised' now as it used to be.

Two interviewees originally started teaching in secondary school but didn't enjoy it. One moved into an academic post following a PhD, whilst the other took a job in industry. Later she decided she needed a management qualification and was offered a research fellowship whilst completing her MBA. She became interested in academia and later accepted a Teaching Fellowship, followed by a lectureship.

Whilst three respondents undertook a PhD to enter academia, two others entered academia in order to do a PhD. Yet another accepted an academic post in order to have access to the resources to be able to complete his PhD. One respondent went into Higher Education in order to undertake an MBA, which he regarded as a 'vehicle for change'. Prior to this he had never considered entering academia, but he found the academic world enjoyable and was given the opportunity to stay.

Six interviewees gave boredom with their job in industry, and looking for a change, as reasons for entering academia. Another stated that the collapse of the industry he was in was the reason for the move. Some interviewees used their industrial experience, often as trainers, as qualification for undertaking an academic post. Others gave their research background and the opportunity for pursuing research that academia provided. Some identified variety, people involvement and security aspects of an academic post as influencing them, whilst two indicated that an unfulfilled ambition had prompted the move. It appeared, from those interviewed, that most transfers into an academic post, even in pre-1992 universities, had been opportunistic rather than specific career aspirations.

3.1.8 Industrial Experience

Eight interviewees, predominantly from post-1992 institutions, had had industrial experience prior to their first degree. The majority of those with industrial experience had gained that experience between their first degree and commencing teaching. Five undertook an industrial post between their first degree and a post-graduate qualification such as a PhD or MBA. Of these a higher proportion were from pre-1992 Business Schools. Only one interviewee (from a post-1992, Computer Science Department) undertook industrial experience whilst initially studying for a PhD (see Figures 3.13 and 3.14).

The type of industrial experience gained by interviewees was variable. For Computer Science academics, the industrial background given was general computing, programming, systems analysis, engineering, training, the Civil Service or the air force. Business School interviewees gave accountancy, auditing, retailing, marketing,

stock broker, business analyst, social work, personnel, production manager, training, family business, the Civil Service and also the air force, as their industrial experience prior to academia.

3.1.9 Research Background

More of the interviewees from post-1992 institutions (in a ratio of 5:3) had undertaken research posts prior to becoming academics. Research experience included academic research laboratories and also research in areas such as the Trade Union, Prison Service and in industry as a Research and Development Chemist. The short-term nature of research contracts was specified as a motivation for moving into academia. All of the post-1992 interviewees who had research experience still managed to combine a limited amount of research together with their teaching.

3.2 Primary Purposes of Higher Education

'Higher Education has many purposes, not all of them mutually compatible; there will be differences of opinion about priorities to be accorded to the different purposes; and opinions about priorities will, from time to time, change' (Reynolds 1986:3).

Pre-1992 universities have historically been regarded as having a greater orientation towards the 'intrinsic' functions of higher education i.e. the pursuit and transmission of knowledge. Education in polytechnics, however, was seen more in the light of its 'extrinsic' functions, i.e. services to society (Whitburn et al, 1976), though 'the ending of the binary divide in 1992 encouraged many of the ex-polytechnics to aspire to the old ideals' (Dearlove, 1997:57). Halsey and Trow reported a similar phenomenon of 'convergence' with regards to the CATs in the 1960s. They noted that the CATs began to resemble universities more closely as soon as they knew they were to gain university status (Halsey and Trow 1971).

When recommending major university expansion and the creation of the polytechnic sector in the 1960s, Robbins recognised both of these 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' aspects. To Robbins the aims of Higher Education included:

i) 'instruction in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour'

ii) 'to promote the general powers of the mind' and produce not ' mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women.'

iii) 'the advancement of learning'. Robbins acknowledged that 'There are controversial issues here concerning the balance between teaching and research'. 'But the search for truth is itself most vital when it partakes of the nature of discovery.'

iv) 'the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship.' (Robbins, 1963:6-7).

The study recognised the multiplicity of purposes that higher education espoused. The purposes relating specifically to university teaching were grouped under the headings 'academic', 'vocational', 'personal' and 'social'. This effectively mapped on to Goodlad's matrix of 'intellectual' and 'practical' on one axis, with 'social' and 'personal' on the other (Goodlad 1995). Assigning each of the purposes identified by the interviewees to one of the groups was not as straightforward as might at first appear. The following, however, was used as a guide:

Academic	academic theory, cognitive and intellectual skills including conceptual understanding, creativity, analytical and evaluative skills.
Vocational	preparation for work/professional life hence work-related specialist skills and knowledge, and practical tools.
Personal	personal growth and development including development of the student's autonomy, confidence, maturity and independence.
Social	benefits to society including economic ('extrinsic') aspects of producing qualified manpower, together with cultural ('intrinsic') aspects including values and citizenship.

Interviewees were asked what they thought were the primary purposes of Higher Education, with specific reference to their teaching role. The number of academics who identified a particular aspect as being of importance to them was tabulated (see Figures 3.16 and 3.17a and 3.17b). No weightings were applied, so the figures could only be used as an indication of orientation, rather than having any absolute value.

Purposes of Higher Education

		Academic	Vocational	Personal	Society
A	BS	7	6	3	
A	CS	1	1	2	1
B	BS	8	6	6	3
B	CS	2	2		
C	BS	4	2	1	1
C	CS	2	2	2	1
D	CS	2	2	3	1
Tot	*all*	26	21	17	7

Figure 3.16

Purposes of Higher Education (a)

Combination including:	**Pre-92** *%*	**Post'92** *%*	**Bus Stud** *%*	**Comp Sci** *%*
Academic	86	71	87	69
Vocational	59	36	61	36
Personal Development	50	50	48	50
Benefits to Society	9	21	13	15
Not mutually exclusive	14	0	9	8

Figure 3.17a

The results showed that academics had difficulty specifying one main purpose of higher education, or providing rankings. It would appear that all four orientations were involved, with a slightly greater emphasis on 'academic' and the least importance being assigned, at least explicitly, to 'benefits to society'. It must be noted, that 'benefits to society' may be implicit in both 'vocational', with its

economic implications, and 'personal development of students', which may include aspects of values, culture and citizenship.

The thesis of Goodlad's book is that if education neglects any one of the needs of persons indicated in his matrix (intellectual; practical; social; personal), 'some form of "heresy" is in danger of being perpetrated' (Goodlad, 1995:23). Goodlad defined a 'heresy' as being an exaggeration of 'the truth' in one direction or another.

Purposes of Higher Education (b)

	A/ BS	A/ CS	B/ BS	B/ CS	C/ BS	C/ CS	D/ CS	*Total*
Academic, intellectual skills, intrinsic	1		1	1	1	1		5
Academic for ugs, vocational for pgs	2		1					3
Academic & vocational	1	1	2	1	2	1		8
Academic, vocational & personal development	3		1					4
Academic & personal development			3		1	1	1	6
Academic, personal development & economic			1				1	2
Academic & benefits to society (culture/economic)						1		1
Vocational & personal development						1	1	2
Vocational, personal development & economic			1		1			2
Personal development		2						2
Not mutually exclusive	2	1						3

Figure 3.17b

The majority of academic staff teaching in post-1992 institutions had gained their first degree in pre-1992 universities (figure 3.6) and this could have had some influence on their orientation. Members of academic staff in post-1992 institutions who had gained a PhD, or were currently studying for one, were more likely to identify ' academic' and 'personal development' aspects as being of primary importance, rather than 'vocational'. There could also be the issue of 'convergence' as identified by Halsey

and Trow (1971), or as one interviewee put it, 'I think we're becoming more theoretical now as we're trying to become a proper university' (C/CS). This interviewee did acknowledge, however, that his orientation was primarily vocational due to his polytechnic background.

3.2.1 'Academic'

The primary purposes of higher education teaching included a balance of the four main aspects/orientations i.e. academic, vocational, personal and social. There was a greater emphasis on an 'academic' orientation, particularly in pre-1992 institutions, though predominantly in combination with other aspects. Five interviewees gave 'academic' purposes alone, compared to eight who stated 'academic and vocational' and six who indicated 'academic and personal development'.

Interviewees included academic theory, cognitive skills, conceptual understanding, development of intellectual enquiry, learning how to learn and think, analytical thinking, creativity and academic rigour under the heading of 'academic'.

One Business School interviewee in a pre-1992 institution indicated that the ability of the students they were teaching had an effect on his orientation i.e. he implied that the better able student would cope with a greater 'academic' orientation. Four interviewees in pre-1992 institutions stated that an 'academic' orientation was more important in undergraduate teaching compared to postgraduate or post experience teaching. One interviewee stated that there were almost all 'academic' and zero 'vocational' elements when teaching undergraduates.

Four interviewees gave more 'traditionalist' responses. Two of these (both B/BS) felt that 'pursuit of knowledge' was of prime importance, though one also acknowledged that in practice the main purpose of higher education was to 'prepare people for employment in slightly higher jobs than people who have been prepared in school are'.

3.2.2 'Vocational'

Five academics in pre-1992 institutions used terms such as 'practical', 'professional', 'technical' or 'specialist skills' when indicating a 'vocational' orientation. 'Vocational it is not' was one response (B/BS). One interviewee (B/BS) stated that his main role was to give students a set of tools with which to solve problems, and that giving them a good vocational background was much less important. Hence there was a greater reluctance to use the term 'vocational', in pre-1992 institutions, though some did acknowledge a 'vocational element'.

Five interviewees in pre-1992 institutions, in both Business Studies and Computer Science, stated that their subject discipline inevitably had a vocational orientation. It might be expected that students in both of these disciplines had chosen the particular subject with future employment in mind. One interviewee in a post-1992 university acknowledged that the former polytechnics were perceived as having a vocational education ethos, though he felt that this was 'only a small part of it' (D/CS).

3.2.3 'Personal'

Three interviewees, all in a pre-1992 Business School, felt that the social aspect of university was important, one stating that it was 'the only time in your life when you can try to have a bit of fun'. One academic in a pre-1992 institution felt that 'personal development' was more important for undergraduate teaching than postgraduate or post experience. Two interviewees in a post-1992 institution (C/BS and C/CS) felt that the academic's role in the personal development of the student had diminished with modularisation.

3.2.4 'Benefits to Society'

Five interviewees, predominantly in the Business Studies discipline in both sectors, (three in B/BS, one in C/BS and one in D/CS), referred to 'employable' or economic aspects as being of importance. Two of these specifically used the term 'UK plc'. One

(B/CS) believed that education in its own right was important. In addition, one interviewee in a post-1992 institution, felt he suffered 'from the embitterment of the classical liberal', and was the only academic to specify culture and 'making society a better place' (C/CS) as the primary aim.

3.2.5 Not Mutually Exclusive

Three academics in pre-1992 institutions stated that all aspects were important; two of these were reluctant to assign any ranking. One felt that no single aspect was more important than another. In addition, one academic specifically used the term 'not mutually exclusive'. One interviewee (A/CS) noted that all four aspects were important but he felt that his primary purpose was to 'inspire'.

3.3 Teaching and/or Research Orientation

Teaching is a major function of most academic staff, but it is not necessarily their dominant function (Blaxter et al 1998b). Membership of the academic profession and status within academe, at least in elite departments, is defined in terms of excellence in scholarship and originality in research, and not to any degree in terms of teaching originality (Becher 1989, Brennan et al 1994). Hence research tends to be a dominant function of pre-1992 universities, whereas the former polytechnics were developed primarily as teaching institutions.

The tension between teaching and research had been further exacerbated by the financial reward structure, which favoured research in comparison to teaching. The UGC adopted research excellence as the fundamental criterion in the distribution of cuts in recurrent grant in 1985-86 (Shattock1988). The resulting research selectivity exercise meant that research excellence attracted enhanced funding, which continued throughout the 1990s. It would not be unexpected, therefore, to find that the former polytechnics would hope to develop their research profile following promotion to university status.

Heads of Department spend significant periods of time on administration and management in addition to teaching and/or research. The extent to which individuals take on these three main roles would, thus, vary between subject areas and institution and in terms of seniority and permanence (Blaxter et al, 1998:283). Whilst research typically has more influence than teaching on promotion decisions in pre-1992 institutions, performance in the management role is at least as, or perhaps more, important in post-1992 universities (Blaxter et al, 1998:289).

The responses from interviewees were grouped into categories, which summarised their stated orientation. These were a) teaching (T) b) both but more towards teaching (Tr) c) balanced equally (TR) d) both but more towards research (tR) and e) research (R). It must be noted that interviewees did not identify, for themselves, which of the categories they fell into. A questionnaire approach would have clarified this further.

3.3.1 Orientation by Sector and Subject

A higher proportion of all interviewees were more oriented to teaching than research; 55% of all interviewees being in the 'T' and 'Tr' categories (see Figure 3.18). This compares with a figure of approximately 45% reported in the Carnegie Survey (Boyer et al 1994). The higher proportion of teaching oriented academics might not be unexpected since a) 40% of all interviewees were in the post-1992 university sector and b) interviewees were often selected (by the 'gatekeepers') as being particularly interested in talking about university teaching. In the post-1992 sector, 57% gave teaching as their main orientation compared to 18% in the pre-1992 sector. There were no interviewees from the post-1992 sector who fell into the 'tR' or 'R' group. Interestingly, in the pre-1992 sector, there were approximately one third in each of the following groups a) 'T' plus 'Tr' b) TR c) 'tR' plus 'R', indicating a range of orientations, with a majority having an interest in both teaching and research.

The pre-1992 Business Schools appeared to have a greater interest in research than the pre-1992 Computer Science departments. One of the pre-1992 Computer Science departments, however, was more specifically a teaching department. A separate research group or division had been created to enhance research in the discipline in this institution.

Similarly, the post-1992 Business School reported a greater interest in research than did the post-1992 Computing Departments. This is borne out by the RAE results to a certain extent, in that the post-1992 Business School gained a '3b' rating compared to '2' for computing, though the proportion of staff submitted was similar (RAE 2001, THES 14.12.2001).

Personal Orientation to Teaching and/or Research

		Teaching	Balanced but more Teaching	Balanced	Balanced but more Research	Research
A	**BS**		1	4	1	2
A	**CS**	2			1	
B	**BS**	2	2	2	3	
B	**CS**		1	1		
C	**BS**	3	2	1		
C	**CS**	3	1	1		
D	**CS**	2	1			
	Tot	12	8	9	5	2
		%	%	%	%	%
All	*Tot*	33	22	25	14	6
Pre-	*1992*	18	18	32	23	9
Post	*1992*	57	29	14	0	0

Figure 3.18

Four main themes were noted by interviewees.

(a) Interrelationship

Eight interviewees, predominantly from the pre-1992 sector, mentioned the inter-relationship between research and teaching. This included doing research related to teaching, hence there being some 'symbiosis'. Five interviewees also felt that both teaching and research were important i.e. they went 'hand in hand,' and that they wouldn't like to do one without the other. They felt that research would be less positive if they didn't teach, and that research was essential to keep teaching up to date.

One professor stated that he felt that there was a continuum of research-scholarship-teaching.

(b) Conflict

Eight interviewees, the majority of which were from post-1992 institutions, identified conflicts which impinged upon their orientation. One (pre-1992) specifically stated that he did not enjoy the research climate, which was too pressurised and hence resulted in bad research being undertaken. He would have liked more time to 'do a good job at teaching', which he felt was something they owed to the students. The Carnegie Survey reported that approximately one third of UK academics felt under pressure to do more research than they would like to do, whilst one third also felt that the pressure to do research reduced the quality of teaching (Boyer et al 1994). Boyer et al concluded that the continuing tension between teaching and research persisted. They felt that the challenge was to move beyond the teaching versus research debate to one that not only promoted the scholarship of discovering knowledge, but also the scholarship of transmitting it (Boyer et al 1994).

Two (pre-1992) interviewees mentioned their high administrative load, arising from management positions, which meant that they had insufficient time to also combine both teaching and research. One had concentrated on research, whilst the other had opted for teaching, which, he felt, suited him better. Insufficient time to pursue research was also felt to be the result of high student:staff ratios, together with the pressure of keeping courses up-to-date as the computing subject area moved so fast. The 'tug of war between the two' often resulted in research being left, to be 'picked up later' (C/CS).

Three (post-1992) interviewees stated that their teaching orientation had arisen through historical reasons, having never had the opportunity to undertake serious research. The high student:staff ratios, together with the lack of a research culture in post-1992 institutions meant that even those who were interested would struggle to develop a significant research profile. One senior academic from a post-1992 Business School, however, also included administration, consultancy and earned income as being part of his role, in addition to being active in research and getting a lot out of teaching. Despite the conflicts of time, this highly motivated Group Head managed to 'motor in all areas' (C/BS).

(c) Personal Orientation

An individual's personal orientation also had an impact on the teaching/research balance. A number of interviewees, even from pre-1992 institutions, stated that they had a stronger commitment to teaching. They included issues such as obtaining better feedback from teaching, teaching being more immediate and enjoying the interaction with students as being factors. Three interviewees (pre-1992) specifically stated that they enjoyed both teaching and research, so leant both ways, but fell broadly in the middle. They felt that they enjoyed, and were good at, both equally.

An academic's background often played a part in the way they saw themselves. One came in from a research background, and though enjoying teaching, felt that his identity was much more as a researcher than a teacher. This is not to say that those coming into an academic post from a research background necessarily felt more drawn to research. Often the opposite was the case with some respondents stating that they felt, subsequently, that teaching suited them better.

Two academics (post-1992) admitted to never having considered undertaking research. Whether this was due to cultural or personal reasons or a mixture of both was unclear. Both were from an industrial/commercial background, however, and both felt that the main purpose of higher education was economic benefits to society. It was felt, therefore, that their leaning towards teaching was more to do with personal orientation.

(d) Career Aspirations

Research was acknowledged by a number of academics in pre-1992 institutions as being necessary for credibility and career progression. Hence, those who were ambitious for readership or professorial posts usually identified a strong commitment to research, though rarely to the exclusion of teaching. One professor admitted that earlier in his career he had concentrated on research in order to gain legitimacy and career progression. He felt that he now had the freedom to follow his personal

inclinations, and hence his publication rate had dropped and, at this stage was concentrating more on teaching and scholarship.

3.3.2 Orientation by Status and Length of Service

The academics with the greatest research orientation were the Teaching Fellows followed by the professors (see Figures 3.19). Both of these groups were found only in the pre-1992 sector sample. As the Teaching Fellows were undertaking PhDs in order to commence an academic career, it would not be surprising that, at this stage, they were concentrating on research. As research output would have contributed substantially to career progression for professors, it would be expected that they, also, would have a pronounced research orientation, though this might have been affected subsequently by a significant management role.

The senior lecturers in the pre-1992 sample showed a greater teaching orientation overall than the corresponding lecturers. Since the lecturers (pre-1992) would be expected to be looking forward to career progression, a research orientation, albeit balanced with teaching, could be predicted. One lecturer, who specified a strong research orientation, had specific aspirations for a readership post.

Both principal lecturers and lecturers in post-1992 institutions showed a significant teaching orientation. The principal lecturers indicated slightly more of a research orientation than the lecturers, possibly because promotion was based on research as well as, or instead of, administration.

In terms of time employed, those new to academia showed the greatest research orientation (see Figure 3.20). This would be due predominantly to the Teaching Fellows. All other groups showed a greater teaching orientation. This gradually changed to include research, as the time employed in higher education increased. This would map, for the most part, onto the orientation/status observations. One deviation from this was the young member of staff who had aspirations for a readership and hence a greater research orientation than was seen in other members of his group.

Teaching/Research Orientation compared to Status

	Teaching	Balanced but more Teaching	Balanced	Balanced but more Research	Research
Professor	0	1	1	1	1
SL (pre-1992)	1	1	1	0	0
PL (post-1992)	4	1	2	0	0
Lecturer A & B (pre-1992)	3	2	4	2	1
Lecturer/SL (post-1992)	4	3	0	0	0
Teaching Fellow	0	0	1	2	0

Figure 3.19

Teaching/Research Orientation compared to Length of Service

	Teaching	Balanced but more Teaching	Balanced	Balanced but more Research	Research
< 6years	0	1	4	4	0
6-12 years	4	2	1	0	1*
13-20 years	4	4	2	0	0
>20 years	4	1	2	1	1
Total	12	8	9	5	2

Figure 3.20

* aspirations to be a Reader

3.3.3 Change in Orientation during Career

The degree of orientation towards teaching or research would not necessarily remain static throughout an academic's career (Trow 1994). It depended on a number of factors, not least the stage of his/her career, and also the institutional context i.e. both the culture with respect to research and the types of students the academic was faced with (Trow 1994). When asked the question about changes in teaching or research orientation one professor (B/BS) specifically stated that his career had been defined more by institutions and contexts.

(a) Increasing Research Focus

When undertaking a PhD, either prior to, or during, an academic appointment, there was usually a strong research focus. When an academic had been teaching for some time, and felt that (s)he (a) had become adept at teaching, or (b) wanted to 'put teaching to bed' for a while, or (c) wished to test their research ability, (s)he developed an increasing interest in research. These academics might adopt a balanced orientation and use research for feeding into teaching, and vice versa, or concentrate increasingly on research specifically for career progression. Those new to research would also include academics in the post-1992 institutions, where research was just beginning to be encouraged. One professor had made a conscious decision to move out of the former polytechnic sector in order to develop his research for career progression.

(b) Increasing Teaching Focus

Early on in his/her academic career, following a PhD, a research or an industrial post, the academic would tend to devote his/her attention to teaching. An academic position typically implied a teaching responsibility. Developing teaching materials would initially take priority over research even in pre-1992 universities, though this stage would be more pronounced, and potentially of longer duration, in a post-1992 institution.

One professor had become increasingly interested in teaching towards the latter part of his career, which had been built on the basis of research. At this stage he felt that he could follow his natural inclination, which was towards teaching and scholarship.

(c) No change in Focus

Four interviewees (two in each sector) stated that they had always been primarily oriented to teaching. One professor in the pre-1992 sector claimed to have always been equally oriented to both teaching and research throughout his career. One

academic with aspirations for a readership stated that he became interested in research during his Masters qualification, and that this orientation had not changed since.

3.4 Academic Loyalty

As previously noted, membership of the academic profession, and reputation within academia, is defined in terms of excellence in research. Professional identity, thus, lies with the academic's own discipline (Barnett 1992, Tight 1988). According to Becher (1989) admission to membership of a particular sector of academia involves not only a sufficient level of technical expertise in the discipline, but also loyalty to the respective collegial group. The cultural characteristics of disciplines are affected both by the changing nature of knowledge domains over time, and also the institutions with which the discipline has a subtle interaction. The standing of a particular department is determined partly by the status of its parent institution and partly by the reputation of the individual academics within it (Becher 1989). Despite these local and national influences, however, there is the 'world' of the discipline itself, and consequently an international disciplinary community.

Academic Loyalty – Rankings

		Student %	**Subject** %	**School or Group** %	**Institution** %
Pre-1992	First	23	45		
	Joint First	14	5	9	
	Second	36		9	
	Joint Second		5	14	9
	Third				14
	Joint Third			5	5
	Fourth			5	
Post-1992	First	43	29		7
	Joint First	14	7	7	
	Second	7	7	29	7
	Joint Second				
	Third	7	14	14	7
	Joint Third				
	Fourth				29

Figure 3.21

Interviewees were asked what they regarded was their primary academic loyalty, the students, their discipline, the School/Department or the institution (see Figures 3.21 and 3.22).

Academic Loyalty and Teaching/Research Orientations

	Teaching %	Balanced but more Teaching %	Balanced %	Balanced but more Research %	Research %
Students (pre-1992)	18		5	5	
Students (post-1992)	43	14			
Subject (pre-1992)		9	9	14	9
Subject (post-1992)	7	14	7		
School/Group (pre-1992)					
School/Group (post-1992					
Institution (pre-1992)					
Institution (post-1992)	7				
Difficult to disentangle (pre-1992)		9	5		5
Difficult to disentangle (post-1992)			7		
None (pre-1992)			14		

Figure 3.22

3.4.1 Students

A higher proportion of the post-1992 interviewees selected students as their prime academic loyalty i.e. ranked them first or joint first place, whilst a greater number of pre-1992 interviewees ranked them second. Hence a similar proportion of pre- and post- 1992 interviewees (73% and 64% respectively) placed students in either first or second place.

When mapping onto teaching/research orientation (figure 3.24), almost a half of the post-1992 interviewees gave teaching as their preferred orientation and students their prime academic loyalty, whereas the figure for pre-1992 respondents was less than one fifth. For the Computer Science interviewees there was a absolute match between teaching orientation and loyalty to students. Surprisingly, one academic (pre-1992

Business School) felt that students were his prime loyalty, and yet he indicated a very strong research orientation.

Academics had a strong feeling of responsibility for the students' education, and wanted to ensure that they received a fair deal despite the constraints in the system. One Divisional Manager (post-1992) felt that the provision of a good quality product tailored to the needs of the students was his prime aim. Another academic stated that he wanted to get the students well into the learning process so that, hopefully, they would go out better prepared for jobs. One pre-1992 interviewee regarded students as having a 'reasonably high priority'. He said that he gained more enjoyment out of discussions with students than with his colleagues. Another stated that now that he had his own course completely, he saw students as his main loyalty. One Head of Group, who described himself as being evangelical about this subject discipline, felt that he did not feel a sense of loyalty to students as a body, but did so to individuals.

Conversely, two interviewees stated that undergraduate students changed too frequently, or that they would not see them again, unlike research students, and so could not feel a loyalty towards them. They did, however, state that they felt they had a duty of responsibility or commitment to them. One academic in a pre-1992 institution said that he could not be loyal to the students because it did not 'buy' him anything. He regarded this as a shame because he took teaching seriously, enjoyed it and felt he was good at it. The reward structure for teaching will be examined further in Chapter 4.

3.4.2 Subject Discipline

More of the pre-1992 interviewees ranked their subject as first or joint first, compared to the post-1992 respondents. Hence a higher proportion of pre-1992 interviewees indicated that their subject discipline was their primary loyalty, with students in second place, whilst the reverse was the case in post-1992 institutions. This result, with the more research oriented pre-1992 institutions indicating a greater loyalty to their discipline than the more teaching-oriented post-1992 institutions, might have been predicted. As a comparison, the Carnegie Survey reported that over 60% of UK

academics indicated an affiliation to their discipline (Boyer at al 1994) but there were no corresponding figures to compare this with commitment to their students.

Only a small proportion of pre-1992 interviewees indicated a primary loyalty to subject plus a significant teaching orientation, whilst a higher proportion of post-1992 interviewees did so. Almost a quarter of pre-1992 academics selected their subject as their primary academic loyalty and stated that they were also strongly orientated to research.

Themes arising from the responses included the transferability of the subject from institution to institution. The institution itself was not regarded as particularly significant except from an image point of view. Academics who gave subject loyalty priority used terms such as 'it's the subject that drives me', 'subject discipline is very strong in my case' and 'my discipline really matters to me'. One academic felt that her role was to explore and develop her subject discipline and adapt it for presentation to the students.

A number of academics indicated difficulty in disentangling their loyalties. One stated that he identified more with his subject, but wouldn't get very far without teaching the students, and the institution enabled him to do both. One post-1992 interviewee, who indicated a prime loyalty to his subject, stated that he enjoyed teaching something that he thought the students would find useful. Another (post-1992), who identified primarily with his subject, stated that there were certain things, which he thought were important and which he wanted to tell people about. One student-centred interviewee (pre-1992) felt that he regarded a loyalty to subject also in terms of believing that it was important. He wanted his students to be as well informed as possible, to take the subject discipline seriously and be interested in it for its own sake and not just as a means to an end. A lack of fit within a subject discipline prompted one pre-1992 academic to indicate a prime loyalty to students.

3.4.3 Group, Department and School

A small proportion of both pre- and post-1992 interviewees allocated joint first place to their department or group usually referring to it as their 'colleagues', or their 'teaching or research group'. In addition, almost a quarter from both sectors placed their department or group in second or joint second place. In a large school, a group might be equivalent in size to a small department, hence the responses from the interviewees in schools usually referred to the group.

A group or department would attract a certain degree of loyalty if the people within it had been working together for a long time, and/or there was a sense of belonging to it. A school might be regarded as being too large and impersonal to attract strong loyalties. The group and school/department would attract a stronger degree of loyalty if it were perceived as respecting the academic, as being worthy of respect and providing the opportunity for academics to do the things that they wished to do. Where the group or school/department was perceived as being less supportive, or having different priorities, there was inevitably a lower level of loyalty towards it. When priorities came into conflict, loyalties were strained. Teaching and research loyalty would centre on the group or department. Group or Division Heads indicated a strong loyalty towards the staff in their group, since they were in a position of responsibility with respect to the teaching and research commitments of the group.

3.4.4 Institution

Almost a fifth of pre-1992 interviewees placed their institution in third or joint third place. Only one of the pre-1992 interviewees identified a fourth position in any of the rankings, and that was for her school. One of the interviewees, from a post-1992 Business School, placed the institution first in the rankings whilst less than a third ranked their institution fourth place in their loyalties. Hence, whilst pre-1992 institutions often omitted 'institution' from their rankings, post-1992 institutions were more positive in placing them last.

The academic who ranked the institution in first place felt that, as an employer himself, the institution should be his primary loyalty. Being grateful for a job attracted a certain degree of loyalty from another academic. Having a sense of belonging, perhaps in a cross-university role, also increased institutional loyalty. An institution that was respected by academics also attracted a higher degree of loyalty. Conversely, interviewees who felt that they had not been well treated by the institution indicated that they had no particular loyalty towards it.

The Carnegie Survey reported that whilst 70% of UK academics felt that they were satisfied with their relationship with their colleagues, fewer than one third were satisfied with the leadership of top-level administrators in their institutions. Almost two thirds of UK academics reported that central administration was too autocratic, and 50% felt that communication between faculty and administration was poor. Faculty world-wide felt that they were less influential in their institutions than in their departments. There was also world-wide concern over the governance of Higher Education. It was not surprising, therefore, that Boyer at al concluded that professional loyalty was stronger than campus loyalty (Boyer at al 1994), a finding that is borne out by this study.

3.4.5 Difficult to Disentangle

A number of the interviewees commented on the difficulties answering the question. They might have felt a certain degree of loyalty to all four categories, which was not easy to disentangle. One academic, from a post-1992 Business School, stated that he could not separate them out. Another from a pre-1992 Business School stated that his loyalty was not to any of the categories given but 'to the idea of teaching people, helping people to learn and changing their world by intellectual enquiry'. This was interpreted as being predominantly a focus on students.

In addition two academics from pre-1992 Business Schools indicated that it was a selfish environment where an academic worked predominantly on their own and that their first loyalty was probably to themselves. One interviewee from a pre-1992 Computer Science department stated that he didn't have any primary academic

loyalty, whilst another responded that he was not sure what academic loyalty actually was.

3.5 Summary

This chapter sought to establish who the interviewees were, not only in terms of their qualifications, status and experience of both higher education and industry, but also in terms of their views and aspirations with respect to teaching in higher education.

The interview sample comprised various grades of staff from Teaching Fellows to Professors. The lecturer grade was the most common grade even for those who had been in academia for a significant number of years. This might indicate poor promotion prospects, which was noted particularly in the post-1992 sector. The reasons for commencing a career in higher education were varied, but essentially were based on the perceived better working conditions, which included greater security than research posts, less pressure, and more interesting and varied work than was found in industry or commerce.

In response to the question as to the primary purposes of higher education, the academics felt that they combined 'academic', 'vocational', 'personal' and 'social' orientations when they were teaching, i.e. these aspects were not mutually exclusive. This is in agreement with Goodlad's (1995) thesis. There was a slightly greater emphasis on the 'academic' orientation, however, particularly for undergraduate teaching, and least on 'benefits to society', even in the post-1992 sector. Issues of convergence as noted by Halsey and Trow (1971), might be involved, as the former polytechnics, originally developed to serve 'extrinsic' functions, aspire to the ideals of the pre-1992 universities.

A higher proportion of the academics were more orientated towards teaching than research, which was not surprising given that 40 per cent of interviewees were from the post-1992 sector, none of whom identified a strong research focus. Despite the fact that a higher number of computer science respondents had a PhD, it was the business studies academics who indicated a greater orientation to research, possibly

because more were undertaking a PhD at the time. An academic's research/teaching orientation was not necessarily static throughout his/her career, but depended primarily on a) personal orientation, b) career aspirations, c) stage of career and d) the institutional context.

In terms of academic loyalty, the pre-1992 interviewees placed their discipline first and the students second, whilst post-1992 respondents identified the students as their primary loyalty with their discipline in second place. For both, the department/group was in third place, whilst their institution was placed last. As the Carnegie (1994) survey concluded an academic's professional loyalty appears to be stronger than his/her campus loyalty. There was a correlation between loyalty to subject and research orientation in pre-1992 universities. Similarly there was a correlation between loyalty to students and a teaching orientation, particularly in post-1992 institutions.

Chapter 4: Institutional Context

The institutional context plays an important part in the perceptions of the staff within it. This chapter seeks to explore the institutional culture and working conditions for the academics concerned. In particular it examines the status of, and support and rewards for, teaching in the universities studied, together with the time allocated to teaching, aspects of teaching and curriculum development, including collaborative developments. Also of interest was whether specific quality management initiatives adopted by the institutions actually benefited teaching. The perceptions of the interviewees provide valuable insights into aspects such as ownership, empowerment and leadership.

4.1 Profile of Teaching

4.1.1 Pre-1992 Institutions

When asked the question does teaching have a high profile in your institution, the majority of the Business School interviewees in institution 'A' said 'yes' but with reservations. As an illustration of the recognition of teaching, one academic commented that she had had to demonstrate innovation in teaching in order to obtain her academic post.

> 'The university as an institution is a research institution, and I would say my personal and professional goals are probably primarily research oriented, because in terms of career advancement it is research. But at the same time our quality of teaching has to be excellent, and in fact as part of my interview to get this job I had to prove how I could be innovative at teaching' (A/BS).

This view contrasted with the Computer Science departments in both pre-1992 institutions, and the Business School in institution 'B', where the majority felt that teaching did not have a sufficiently high profile.

'Pretty low. The university culture in the last few years is towards research. It is claimed by various people that it is moving more towards teaching, but there is little evidence that that is so' (A/CS).

'It depends on how you look at it. If you look at it from a personal point of view as an academic, the thing that is going to get me promoted is my research. Ok, if I'm really bad at teaching, it may be perceived as a problem, but a hell of a lot of people get promoted who are bad at teaching. So I think the university doesn't take teaching as seriously as it should. It says it does' (B/BS).

The meaning of the term 'high profile' was questioned. There was no doubt that teaching was regarded as being 'important' and was treated 'quite seriously' by both institutions. This did not mean, however, that teaching was perceived as being valued, or commanded much institutional respect. Teaching was acknowledged as being the main business of both institutions in terms of the time allocated, and attention paid, to it. Academics estimated devoting half to two thirds of their time to teaching and its related activities, though it was felt that there wasn't really proper recognition of this.

For the Business Schools, the MBA students paid very high fees and so expected good teaching. It was also felt that the undergraduate students were becoming increasingly demanding, both in their expectations and also because of high undergraduate numbers and consequent strains on staff:student ratios.

Teaching inevitably counted on the various academic load models, but research tended to have a higher weighting. The introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) had succeeded to a certain extent in making institutions aware of the need for quality in teaching.

'Research probably slightly more so, but its almost equal. I'm pretty sure that wasn't the case in history, but certainly I think since TQA it has seemed to have. A lot more people are talking about it and aware of the need for quality of teaching' (A/BS).

There was, however, 'far more urgency given to the Research Assessment Exercise' and that 'the name of the game is to avoid doing too much teaching and the only way to do that is to get a high score on the RAE' (A/BS). The general feeling was that: 'teaching is the basic assumption, but what people are valued for is their research' (A/BS).

The perception of the value of teaching was shaped predominantly by the agenda set by senior management. Institution 'A' was regarded as concentrating very much on teaching, and being very effective in it, until 1980 when a new Vice Chancellor attempted to turn it into a more research-based university. Staff appointed since this time were expected not only to prioritise research, but also were:

> 'encouraged pretty ruthlessly in most instances to get away with as little effort in teaching as is humanly possible without bringing the quality of the courses down to a level which might be problematic'(A/BS).

This theme of avoiding too much teaching was also echoed by academics in institution 'B', where it was felt that not only was mediocrity in teaching accepted, but that poor teaching could benefit an academic's career in that (s)he would have more time to devote to research.

> 'This university likes to think of itself as a research-led university, and until very recently there was no mechanism for rewarding good teaching. And there are many stories of lecturers who actually make a point of being bad teachers so that they would get the small class sizes and more time to do their research and improve their chances of promotion' (B/CS).

Despite the introduction of TQA, academics in both of the pre-1992 institutions still felt under more pressure to excel at research rather than teaching. This was due to the high status, both individually and institutionally, of acknowledged excellence in research and also the extra funding provided by gaining high RAE ratings. Hence even when an institution was perceived as having a strong commitment to teaching, this was traded off against an equally strong, if not stronger, commitment to research.

There was significant resentment in a number of instances because of the weighting placed on research in terms of promotion and career advancement. At critical points in an academic's career, therefore, the potential tension between teaching and research was highly significant.

> 'So there is pressure on people to publish which at times in their careers must either just give them a lot of stress or make them cut some corners in their teaching' (B/BS).

4.1.2 Post-1992 Institutions

In contrast to the pre-1992 universities, the post-1992 institutions were regarded as being predominantly teaching institutions, with only tokenism to research. For most academics teaching was considered to be more important than research and consultancy.

There were, however, changing priorities geared usually towards funding mechanisms, which had led to an increased emphasis on research. Consequently there was an increasing need to balance conflicting objectives, leading to the inevitable tensions and frustrations.

Recent initiatives in the Business School of institution 'C' plus the introduction of TQA, were perceived as increasing the profile of teaching and learning. Certainly at School, Department or Divisional level, teaching was regarded as having a higher priority than at institutional level.

> 'I think it does, much higher than it used to have. It's difficult for me to say in some ways because when I came in the Enterprise initiative was under way and that was very much focused on what we teach and how students learn. So I think the profile of the teaching and learning approach had risen then. I wouldn't say it was well developed in all areas of the university or in all areas of the Business School' (C/BS).

A number of staff, particularly in the Computer Science department, however, felt that teaching did not have a sufficiently high profile.

'I get the feeling that it isn't. To give you an example, we get communications from the Directorate. They come down to us from on high and it's noticeable that you get information about changes in the management structure, changes in the Registry, changes in the Library. Very very rarely does anything get mentioned about the teaching. And some of the decisions that we hear, they appear to be based more on organisational and managerial requirements than what would be best for our students in terms of their education' (C/CS).

Despite the fact that status and kudos in an institution were informally linked to teaching, there was no formal recognition of teaching excellence.

> 'That very much depends on what you mean by high profile. I think in terms of reward, in terms of getting into the higher positions and the financial benefits that accrue from that, the answer is no. In terms of your peers looking at you and saying – peers know, we all know who are the very good teachers, the good teachers and those we don't rate so highly, and we've all got the pecking order. And status and kudos within the institution on an informal basis is linked around teaching. So I think there is a dichotomy there. I think we all want to believe that teaching is recognised formally and I don't think it is' (C/BS).

Certainly, being regarded as a good teacher was not sufficient, on its own, to qualify an academic for promotion. A recognised researcher could gain promotion purely on the basis of research, but teaching had to be offered within a range of skills including administration, consultancy and/or income generation.

4.2 Teaching Hours

Establishing comparable teaching time commitments was not straightforward, mainly because of the term on term, and sometimes week on week, variability. Teaching commitments encompassed a variety of tasks including lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, laboratory sessions, supervision of individual and group projects and taught postgraduate dissertations together, in some instances, with supervision of

work placements. The teaching hours identified did not include marking or preparation time, nor informal office hours or meetings with personal tutees. Management or administrative responsibilities and research plus research postgraduate supervision were also excluded. These were treated as concessions, which reduced teaching allocations in the load models used. Staff new to teaching, sometimes termed 'probationary staff', were allocated a reduced, approximately two thirds, teaching load. Teaching Fellows were also allocated half the normal teaching load, while they completed their PhD.

4.2.1 Teaching Time in Pre-1992 Institutions

The institutions used formal or informal load models to allocate teaching. The Business School in university 'A' established a load model in retrospect. Each individual's contribution to research, teaching and administration over the previous twelve months were equated into points and compiled into a 'league table' at the end of the year. Research had a higher weighting than teaching or administration in this model. Whereas a Head of Group/Division might have a load of 80 hours per year, the range for other teaching staff would usually be between 150 and 200 hours per year. Figures of three to four courses per year and eleven to twelve teaching contact hours per week were specified. Teaching was limited predominantly to terms one and two.

The Computer Science department in institution 'A' usually allocated three modules per staff per year, each module comprising three hours per week of lecturing time. Associated teaching activities plus supervision of four to five undergraduate projects per year, meant that ten to twelve teaching contact hours per week were the norm.

The Business School in university 'B' also had a system for allocating teaching called measuring workload. Its planning system allowed for a maximum of six hours average lecturing time per week, i.e. 180 hours per year. Each group had its own method of allocating its teaching, though they were trying to move to a School standard. A light load would be 70 hours per year, whilst 140 hours was described by one academic as 'relatively low by school standards'.

The Computer Science department in institution 'B' usually allocated two modules per member of staff per year. This might vary according to whether the academic was teaching the larger core courses or the smaller options, i.e. student numbers and CATS weightings were taken into account. An academic would usually have approximately twelve hours teaching contact per week, including approximately three hours lecturing time, three hours seminar and laboratory sessions and six hours of project supervision. Again, teaching was limited to two terms, with the final term usually reserved for revision classes and examinations.

4.2.2 Teaching Time in Post-1992 Institutions

Institution 'C' adopted a university-wide load model of a maximum of 550 hours per year. Concessions, in steps of 50 hours, were given for management and administrative responsibilities and research, which included completing a PhD, and/or research postgraduate supervision. Teaching was allocated over two thirteen-week semesters.

A Division Head would qualify for a banding of 250 hours or an average of 9 hours per week. This would be reduced to 200 hours if the Head had additional administrative responsibilities e.g. was also a Course Director. Only the Dean of School or Associate Deans would have less teaching than this. An average of twelve to fifteen teaching hours per week i.e. bands of 300 to 400 hours, would be common for most other staff.

Institution 'D' did not specify how its teaching allocation was worked out. A Head of Subject would be allocated an average of five hours teaching per week. A teaching week of less than fifteen hours was regarded as being light. One member of staff stated that he had fifteen teaching hours per week, excluding projects, and yet still had not yet been allocated his full workload since he was in his first year of teaching. It was not established whether institution 'D' worked on a term or semester basis, hence it was difficult to obtain comparable annual teaching hours.

4.2.3 Other Duties

Teaching contact hours were only part of an academic's commitments. In addition to teaching, academics were allocated personal tutees whom they met on an informal basis. Institution 'A' indicated that each academic was allocated 25-30 personal tutees. The personal tutorial system did not appear to operate very comprehensively or systematically in institutions 'A' or 'D'.

Academics were also expected to be available to talk to students informally, and so were encouraged to specify 'office hours'. These varied from two to four hours per week. A number of academics had an 'open-door' policy for informal student enquiries. Institutions 'A', 'C' and 'D' had a number of students on placement in the penultimate year of a four-year degree course. These students would require supervision, including visits to the work placement and assessment of work experience projects. No indication of time commitment was given for this by the academics concerned.

Supervision of PhD students would be additional to the teaching contact hours. The average 'load' for staff in pre-1992 institutions would be two to four PhD students. Again no indication of time commitment was given for this.

Leadership and/or administrative responsibilities were part of every academic's role. Typical responsibilities mentioned by the academics in the study were as Course Director, Head of Subject, Head of Division, Group Convenor, postgraduate project administration, academic planning for a new degree, running a Teaching Company Scheme and conducting academic staff appraisals.

Assessment took up a significant amount of academic staff time. Unlike class contact time, assessment time increased significantly with increasing student numbers and student:staff ratios. One interviewee (A/CS) commented that the bulk of their time was spent on assessment of a course, due to the large amount of practical work. Another (C/BS) stated that she was currently marking about 120 final year, 5000

word scripts plus another twelve - 10,000 word dissertations. Her comment on this was 'what quality is there in that'?

4.3 Policies to Support Teaching and Promote Teaching Excellence

4.3.1 Research into Teaching Methods

Academics were asked whether research into teaching methods was encouraged in their institution as additional to, or instead of, research into their subject area.

Similar responses were received from both departments in the pre-1992 institutions. A few staff had a personal interest in research into teaching. There had originally been a Department of Educational Research in pre-1992 university 'A', and some staff from this department were still in the current Business School. Both institutions felt that research into teaching methods was located more in an educationally oriented department, or within the Staff Development function. Publications arising from the latter were regarded as being on a professional rather than academic level.

Both pre-1992 institutions commented that they had drawn externally on the research into teaching activities undertaken by Oxford Brookes University. This had manifested itself in the form of personal participation on courses focusing on teaching methods. Also externally, the development of publications such as *Teaching in Higher Education* was regarded as promoting research into teaching methods. Despite this, however, it was felt that research into teaching was still not regarded as bona fide research in the pre-1992 universities, and little if any credit would be given for it currently.

'There is someone in Mathematics who does bits and pieces, but there is no credit for it, certainly not in this department. I have written a few papers with 'X' on various teaching things, but then no one cares about it. It's just dismissed. On the one hand there is this grand scheme that teaching is terribly important to the students, how we do everything we can, but it's not true. There's no benefit because if you do pay any attention to that it's just wasted time in some sense, which is terrible. But that might change' (B/CS)

Such research would be neither encouraged nor discouraged, though development of teaching skills and teaching methods were promoted in some instances, by the provision of small amounts of funding.

Post-1992 institution 'D' was not aware that any research into teaching methods was being undertaken. Some interest was noted in post-1992 institution 'C' where one member of staff was studying for a PhD in teaching in their subject area. Again some academics perceived that such research was not specifically encouraged.

> 'I think there may be one or two people looking at it but I'm not aware of very much in that area in this School'. 'It's not sort of actively discouraged, but I don't think there is any particular emphasis in that way' (C/CS).

Since post-1992 institutions were developing from such a low research base, however, it was felt that all research would be supported, provided that it could be seen as either benefiting teaching and/or resulting in publications.

> 'I would say research into anything is encouraged at the moment. I think up to very recently, perhaps this year, there has been a relatively unfocused view of research. If you want to do research, and you want to produce something, we will support you. If we can see some sort of link to either the teaching or the subject matter, it would be supported' (Divisional Head: C/BS).

4.3.2 Information Technology (IT) in Teaching and Learning

When asked what teaching initiatives were operating in their institution, the majority of interviewees identified the use of Information Technology (IT). This included both hardware and software for supporting teaching, learning, assessment and administration.

Interviewees in pre-1992 institution 'A' felt that they were working in a technologically advanced university, where IT was encouraged but 'not forced on

you'. Lap-top computers were available for the preparation and presentation of lectures, and all lecture theatres were fitted with projection facilities. A number of lecturers had developed computer-assisted learning packages to support the modules, including the development of CD ROMs, so that individual students could undertake supplementary learning in their own time. Extended case studies based on IT models were also being developed, as were computer-assisted assessment procedures for the setting and marking of assignments.

Interestingly, the Computer Science department in institution 'A' still used fairly traditional methods for the delivery of modules, but used IT more in terms of academic administration i.e. facilitating the module itself. Email was the major method of communication, and they were also beginning to use email for the submission of assignments. Student feedback on modules was administered electronically i.e. was web-based. It was felt that there were insufficient resources in terms of professional technical staff to optimise the integration of IT in the department.

Again, institution 'B' was beginning to use lap-tops for the preparation and presentation of lectures. Self-learning packages were used in some areas e.g. in accounting. There were increasing developments in web-based distance learning materials. It was felt that the MBA students demanded professional and slick presentations, and hence the Business School used IT not only for delivery of lecture materials but also for simulations and animations. In addition to using IT for presentations, and making some of their modules available on the web, the Computer Science department, with increasing student numbers in mind, were concentrating predominantly on computer-assisted assessment.

Post-1992 institution 'D' stated that there was some use of IT in lectures, but not as much as there should be. Institution 'C' however had made some funds available to promote the use of IT in teaching, for non-IT oriented staff. Both departments were in the process of making all of their modules available on the internet. This, together with the establishment of 'chat-lines', would be used to aid self-learning. Institution 'C' were also developing packages for self-learning, for self-assessment and also for

remedial work. The Business School were developing the use of distance learning materials for MBA students. Automatic assessment and examination using IT were identified as innovations in the Computer Science department. There was increasing use of Powerpoint to display lecture slides, but there were a limited number of portable projector systems, which required technical assistance to set up prior to each lecture. In this respect IT was regarded as useful, but often an 'extra burden' (C/CS).

4.3.3 Large and Small Group Teaching and other Teaching Innovations

The Staff Development Unit of institution 'A' was active in arranging courses on different approaches to teaching e.g. in large group and/or small group teaching. The Business School used a variety of teaching methods including long case studies, role-play and problem solving learning. Visiting speakers would be incorporated in, for example, a contract exercise, which could be recorded on video for feedback purposes. A purpose-built CCTV suite was available for tutored video instruction. Lectures would be recorded and it had been proposed that these could be made available on campuses elsewhere in the country or in companies. They were, in fact, only being used by the Business School to support the distance learning MBA. In this respect it was regarded by some as not being a particularly successful initiative given the set up costs involved.

There were similar large and small group teaching courses in institution 'B'. Again the Business School, whilst using traditional lectures for large groups, tended to incorporate more innovative methods in their teaching, including the use of videos, case studies, simulation exercises, syndicate work and management games. These were felt to be imitating rather than being strictly innovative. There was also some use of peer group assessment and team teaching.

Institution 'C' had promoted, by means of staff development seminars, the incorporation of more enterprising teaching and learning methods, and imaginative ways of dealing with large student groups. Teaching was regarded for the most part as 'facilitating'. This had resulted in the incorporation of more group work, project work, team work and course work, which encouraged students to be increasingly

involved in their own learning. Some of the methods used were not entirely successful, and were at times constrained by high student numbers and large group sizes. Again the Business School used a wide range of teaching methodology to facilitate learning, including role-play, case studies, syndicate work and buzz groups. In some instances, students were also involved in evaluating their own learning experiences and setting out their own learning objectives. Rationalisation and standardisation of modules were promoted, as was the preparation of participants' and distance learning packs. All modules were re-written in terms of learning outcomes, which was noted as benefiting both staff and students in terms of improving clarity and consistency of module information.

Only the Computer Science staff in institution 'D' were available for interview. As can be seen from the responses of the other institutions, it appears that Business Schools offer a wider range of teaching and learning methodologies than do Computer Science departments. Institution 'D' stated that they had borrowed teaching initiatives from outside. Such initiatives included using small group teaching in computer laboratories and making use of students in preparing and leading discussion groups.

4.3.4 Quality Management Initiatives

Two of the institutions had adopted formal quality management systems. In the case of institution 'A' this was Total Quality Management (TQM), whilst institution 'C' had chosen ISO 9001 together with Investors in People (IIP). Interviewees were, therefore, asked whether quality management systems, such as these, had had any beneficial effect on teaching and learning.

TQM had effectively crystallised as Quality Circles in institution 'A'. For the most part interviewees were cynical about any beneficial effect of TQM, which they regarded as being a 'totally inappropriate model for academic work', and which had manifested itself as a mechanistic hierarchy of committees. Phrases such as 'marginal to actual endeavour', 'no practical effect' and 'not much effect at the coal face' were used. They acknowledged, however, that, any quality initiatives arising from TQM

might not have been 'labelled' as such by the time that academics were made aware of them. Interviewees were more aware of Teaching Quality Assessment and felt that any quality improvements, which impacted on teaching, were more likely to do with TQA than TQM.

> 'The quality of teaching has radically altered in five years, but I wouldn't have a clue really whether the TQM initiative was responsible for that'. 'We all sort of assume that it is TQA which has driven the changes plus, in our case actually far more importantly, the desire to get our feet up substantially faster than we did in the past and therefore to justify that'. 'We don't need to know under which label to which banner or through which provenance we're making changes. We just need to be sure that the changes make sense and be able to implement them' (A/BS).

Similarly in institution 'C' there was a perception that ISO 9001 was 'peripheral to teaching' and consequently of little benefit. Again its mechanistic approach, 'overburdened with committees', and resulting in an overabundance of paperwork was criticised. Quality Circles had 'petered out' early on. Some interviewees, however, felt that ISO 9001 was still evolving, and that IIP was an enabling tool. From an administrative point of view, ISO 9001 was regarded as beneficial in terms of ensuring the 'consistency of the student experience across the board'. Others felt that the quality system had been imposed on them, and had led to more monitoring, but little control. ISO 9001 was particularly criticised for the increased need for form filling and 'tick box' mentality. This was a regarded as a 'chore', which had led to an increased workload, and consequently hindered the work of academics.

> 'Then 'Quality' comes along and says right you have to fill in a form to request the technician to do this and the technicians must counter-sign the form. Well all the other things you've got to do, you've got to find out where do you find this form. You know, you can't have forms for everything'. 'So the work has tripled with just doing exactly what you were doing before' (C/CS).

Neither institution 'B' or 'D' had instigated any specific quality initiative, apart from internal quality assurance procedures, at both institution and/or school/department

level. One interviewee felt that, rather late in the day, institution 'B' was now taking staff development seriously. The Business School in 'B' did state that they taught TQM and so were aware of its philosophy. It was felt that quality procedures were 'not so much about doing things better, it's that we're not failing in things' (Group Head: B/BS).

4.4 Rewards to Improve Teaching Quality

4.4.1 Promotion Criteria

There are three main aspects of an academic's role, namely teaching, research and management/administration. Whilst research typically has more influence than teaching on promotion decisions in pre-1992 institutions, performance in the management role is at least as, or perhaps more, important in post-1992 universities. (Blaxter et al,1998:289).

The academics interviewed felt that the promotion criteria in their institution were far from clear. There was a common theme of formal promotion criteria not being followed definitively in practice. Lack of clarity in what the goal posts actually were, together with changing agenda and the need for constant double guessing of university policy, led to a noted degree of dissatisfaction with respect to promotion.

> 'And the game is a constant double guessing about what the 'university' is doing or their policies, which seem to swing around an awful lot. And that leads to a lot of dissatisfaction because as the committees we feel quite powerless. We know who we want to promote, but that's not the same as we think the university would approve, so there is that kind of game going on' (Group Head: B/BS).

> 'One of the PLs who is quite astute, said if you want to get promoted what you have to do is guess what's going to be flavour of the month in about a year's time and get into it. And I think there is probably a lot of that' (C/CS).

Formally institution 'A' appeared to give equal weighting to research and teaching and a substantial, though lesser, weighting to administration. In practice it was assumed that research was a pre-requisite, and that teaching 'was essentially unimportant'. There was a perception that teaching was 'the basic assumption', but what academics were 'valued for' was their research (A/BS). Some even went as far as stating that in order to maximise a career in the 'old' university sector, an academic needed to optimise or even minimise their teaching.

Although research was acknowledged as the primary criterion for promotion at present, a number of academics in institution 'A' believed that the criteria had recently changed. Promotion to a Senior Lecturer could in future, therefore, be on the basis of excellence in teaching or management/administration. One example was given that a Director of Postgraduate Studies gained a Senior Lectureship on the grounds of his management role (A/CS). There were, however, no examples of Senior Lectureships being gained primarily on the basis of teaching excellence. Promotion to a Readership or a Chair would still be based on excellence in research.

Promotion was perceived as being 'very much based on research' in institution 'B'. One Group Convenor stated that it was far more stringent and complicated to put a case forward for promotion on the basis of teaching excellence.

> 'The assumption is that you have to put a case forward based on research. If you do put a case forward based on teaching a) it's a lot more difficult to get it through b) you have to demonstrate teaching through pseudo-research methods like publication about teaching as well as just teaching excellence and c) you have to have a minimum research level of activity as well' (Group Head: B/BS).

There was some resentment of this in view of the fact that teaching occupied over 50% of an academic's working life. Excellence in teaching was regarded by some interviewees as being detrimental to an academic's career, in that it overshadowed their research. In addition, there was a perceived view that a good teacher was regarded as merely entertaining students, rather than encouraging effective learning. Gifted teachers, therefore, didn't gain promotion unless they were also excellent in

research. In fact a number of academics regarded as being poor teachers had managed to gain promotion purely on the basis of their research expertise. A few 'all-rounders', incorporating both teaching and general good citizenship, had also been promoted, but this was felt to be relatively rare.

One interviewee stated that her probation period had been extended because she had not achieved the necessary level of research output. No reference was made to her teaching or administrative ability, which to her 'implied that they didn't really care' (B/BS). If anything, the weighting on publications and research was perceived to have increased in the last five to ten years, because of the influence, in both status and financial terms, of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). On the other hand institutions were beginning to feel under more pressure to reward teaching excellence, as a result of TQA. Institution 'B' had also recently introduced guidelines for the measurement of teaching quality, with a view to promotion based on teaching excellence. It remained to be seen how the institution would interpret the guidelines in practice.

> 'Until June this year, teaching was a no go because the Promotions Committee would refuse to entertain any application based on that because they didn't understand how to measure it'. 'The rules have now changed and there is now a set of guidelines which will enable the Promotions Committee to set about such a task. However, since they have not been through the procedure, it remains to be seen how they interpret the guidelines they've been given' (B/CS).

Even in the post-1992 institutions, being a good teacher was not enough, on its own, to qualify an academic for promotion, whereas being a good researcher was. Inevitably, it might be expected that more emphasis would be placed on research in the former polytechnics when they gained university status. As one Head of Division in institution 'C' pointed out, he had only recently been able to offer Principal Lectureships on the basis of research ability.

> 'This is the first time I'm saying to people, yes you can get PLs out of research'. ' But I can see it getting greyer and we're certainly pushing down, lets get the deputy admin

roles with PLs. Lets get those first and then we'll get the research ones. And I can see the research ones being lost' (Division Head: C/BS).

One Computer Science academic admitted that he was fortunate in being promoted 'through a window of opportunity'(C/CS), on the basis of his research. He acknowledged that Principal Lecturer posts were primarily awarded for management or administrative ability which, in his case, were 'very minimal'.

The general perception in institution 'C' was that teaching did not play any part in promotion, and that academics were promoted primarily because they were good administrators, not because they were good academics.

'No, its administrative ability, perhaps some innovation. They like people who bring money into the university, people who can run external courses, be inventive, start new courses, that sort of thing. Teaching doesn't form any part of promotion' (C/CS).

All Principal Lecturers were involved in a leadership role of some sort, though innovation, consultancy and earned income ability would also be taken into account. Institution 'D' echoed the theme of leadership in both the subject, and in course administration and development, as the main criteria for promotion to a Principal Lectureship, though it was believed that research could now form a part.

4.4.2 Promotion Prospects

As has been noted, promotion criteria in the institutions involved in the study appeared to be somewhat elusive. Interviewees in institution 'A' felt that, in practice, the criteria were 'excessive' to say the least, and that it was even 'pretty tough' getting promotion on the basis of research. In the Computer Science department, it was thought that no one had bothered to seek promotion in the last three or four years. This was due to three main factors including a) they were not particularly ambitious, b) the procedure was extremely long and demanding and c) they were conscious that tenure rights would be lost.

Similar issues were noted in institution 'B', where there was no doubt that an academic could gain promotion by being an excellent researcher, but the criteria were exceptionally stringent. It was felt that institution 'B' was 'really tough' (B/BS) in this respect, in comparison with other pre-1992 universities, and that it was 'really stunning' (B/CS) what an academic had to do in order to progress.

Academics in both of the post-1992 institutions felt that there was no obvious career structure for academics and very little evidence of promotion in the post-1992 sector.

> 'I have argued this at public meetings here that there is no career structure. We seem to be in a series of dead-end jobs' (C/BS).

> 'I think you have to bear in mind that promotion as such very rarely takes place in an institution of this nature. One of my biggest criticisms is that there is no obvious career structure' (Division Head: D/CS).

4.4.3 General rewards and incentives

In the absence of promotion for teaching excellence, what incentives did academics have to improve teaching quality? A number of academics in institution 'A' felt that there were no systematic rewards or incentives for good teaching. Some academics in both departments, identified a Performance Related Pay (PRP) scheme, in which money was made available every year for additional payments to non-professorial staff. This was awarded for any type of outstanding activity, and some academics had received PRP awards for excellence in teaching. One interviewee commented, however, that the relationship between the award, and what the academic had actually done to achieve it, was obscure. So nominally there was a reward scheme, but 'with a deficient mechanism'(A/BS).

Interviewees in institution 'B' felt that there was no formal recognition of good teaching. Incentives were of the form of personal satisfaction and respect of peers.

'There are only disincentives for not improving it, that is if you get things wrong you get shouted at, but no, apart from the personal satisfaction of a job well done. And that doesn't pay the bills' (B/CS).

One Business School interviewee felt that if anything there were more rewards for bad teaching, in that an academic could get more time for research. There were, thus, few financial rewards, though additional and discretionary increments were mentioned. The Business School did, however, offer Executive Programmes, which could prove lucrative for talented senior staff who had the necessary show-person teaching skills.

Academics in both of the post-1992 institutions stated that there were no rewards or incentives for good teaching, apart from professional satisfaction and respect of colleagues.

'I think the simple answer to that is that there aren't any. You can talk about the warm feeling that people get, and you can also talk about the fact that if they're really good at their job then they are encouraged by being given the sort of things they'd like to do, rather than being given the things they have to do. But there are no visible rewards and incentives, unfortunately' (Division Head: D/CS).

Again being a good teacher was regarded as being almost detrimental in that an academic might be allocated more teaching, or end up with 'queues of students wanting advice on their essays' (C/CS).

4.5 Curricular Development

The academics' involvement in curricular developments was examined in order to provide more information on their perceptions of the context in which they were working, and in particular to gain insights into aspects such as ownership, professional autonomy and collaboration.

4.5.1 Top Down or Bottom Up

University-wide initiatives, such as changing from a three-term to a two-semester teaching year, would be instigated at a senior level within the institution. Programmatic development i.e. new courses or combinations of courses would, usually, be the formal responsibility of senior members of staff in a School or Department, such as a Senior Tutor, Director of Undergraduate Studies or Senior Studies Advisor. External forces frequently prompted such initiatives, hence curricular developments would often be driven by those academics with access to the 'real world'. The refining and integration of ideas into the existing curriculum would be undertaken at School or Department level, usually by groups of individuals e.g. module or programme teams. The role of senior staff would, thus, be to stimulate and co-ordinate teaching programme developments. Other staff would become involved as appropriate, in order to encourage commitment to, and ownership of, the changes, as well as incorporating their academic expertise.

Incremental development of the content, pedagogy and, to some extent, the assessment of individual modules was usually the responsibility of individual lecturers. It was they who were regarded as the experts in their field and who would make evolutionary changes to modules in response to their own research and/or knowledge of what industry required. Curricular ideas e.g. changes in programming languages, or the development of new modules, also originated to a certain extent from individual academics, with mediation and control of the developments taking place at a more senior level. Subject Groups often had considerable autonomy in developing their own subject area, hence individuals and groups of academics had significant scope for influencing programmatic development.

This top-down/bottom-up model was common to all of the institutions in the study, with curricular development ideas initiated at a variety of levels, and integrated very much in a team approach. Senior staff in the School or Department would usually be regarded as the main driving force, but there was also an inner driving force in play. The balance between these would depend to a large extent on the culture of the school/department and the motivations of the individuals concerned. Overall, the

academics interviewed expressed a high degree of involvement in curricular developments in their institution.

4.5.2 Industrial Involvement

Industrial input was variable within a School, as well as between schools/departments or institutions. There was no systematic attempt to involve practitioners in the Business School of institution 'A', hence their input was described by one academic as being 'pretty marginal', whilst another incorporated members of commerce and industry by means of a series of guest lectures. In terms of industrial input into curricular design and development, one academic stated:

> 'In terms of external help we seek little and we pay attention to little. It's a pretty traditional technological university approach, I would say, with a determined insistence that we won't allow ourselves to be pressed by outsiders, however important they might make themselves out to be' (A/BS).

Many academics were, however, involved in consultancy work, and the majority of students undertook an industrial placement. Hence most academic staff had regular contacts with senior managers and trainers in industry. The Business School also ran Management Development Programmes, in which the industrial client had a significant input. The Computer Science department in institution 'A' who, until recently had had little industrial involvement apart from student placements, were in the process of setting up more formal industrial links, with the establishment of an Industrial Advisory Committee.

Similarly, the Business School of institution 'B' involved industrialists to a variable degree as guest speakers, for supervision of projects, and development of Executive Programmes. An Advisory Committee, which included representatives from industry and commerce, mostly commented on the School as a whole and/or the post-experience programmes. There was little industrial input into the bulk of the undergraduate or postgraduate courses. For the most part, academics felt that they were the experts in their particular field. The Computer Science department had very

little industrial input apart from the occasional guest lecturer, preferring to 'keep industry at arms length'.

The Business School of institution 'C' was more enthusiastic about industrial input, which included industrialists on validation panels, student placements and occasional industrial surveys. Academic staff were also involved in consultancy work. Even so, there was little direct industrial input into curricular development, except for the in-company MBAs. Similarly, there was a 'fair amount of influence' by industrialists in Computer Science, though this was also on an ad-hoc basis.

Views were mixed as to industrial involvement in institution 'D'. One member of staff stated that they had a wealth of industrial contacts through their professional training programme, whilst another thought that there was little industrial liaison now. Industrialists were no longer involved in course validation, and there was a decreasing number of students who needed visiting whilst 'training' in industry.

4.5.3 Market Input on Curricula

Institution 'A' claimed to have a significant market orientation and responded by e.g. arranging engineering courses in more attractive packages, and changing the teaching of modern languages in response to the decline in demand. MBA and Executive Programmes were also designed with the market directly in mind.

Similarly, institution 'B' responded to employers who were funding students on MBA programmes. The MBA market had become increasingly competitive and MBA students paid high fees. The loss of this market would be extremely detrimental to the Business School. Interviewees also recognised that their programmes had become more service oriented in response to market needs. Students had also influenced their decision to develop a combined language and business programme. This development was taking place in other institutions, but it was reinforced by student demand. The School undertook active market analysis, which influenced developments at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Applications to undergraduate programmes were particularly buoyant in Computer Science in 'B', hence there seemed to be less need to undertake active market analysis at the present time. Course modification did take place in response to market needs, however, e.g. changes in the main programming language taught.

The needs of the professions e.g. accounting had to be taken into account in curricular development in institution 'C'. The Business School also responded to market needs with respect to its MBA programmes. Computing was regarded as a rapidly changing discipline, which was driven predominantly by industry. Institution 'C' acknowledged that curriculum development in Computing responded to the employment market, though there was some degree of selectivity, i.e. they might consider only those aspects which were regarded as 'sexy' or 'high cred'.

Whilst there was no active market analysis identified by institution 'D', part time students who were employed in industry, together with industrial placement students, provided some information on market needs.

4.5.4 Effect of Competitors

No comments were obtained from institutions 'A' and 'D', or any of the Computer Science departments, on the effect of competitors on their curricular provision. The Business School in institution 'B' claimed to look more at what their competitors were doing, than what employers were telling them, since it gave them 'a more refined measure'. Generally, it was felt that the School learnt more by looking at its competitors than by talking to industry or other stakeholder groups. In terms of the MBA programmes, competition from other Business Schools was regarded as the main pressure triggering curricular developments.

The effect of competitors on the curriculum was less noticeable in other institutions. The Business School of institution 'C' acknowledged that they didn't monitor other institutions in the way that they felt they ought to.

4.6 Collaboration

The academics' perceptions of the level of collaboration they experienced provided further insights into their working environment, particularly from the perspective of co-operation and team-work, but also to some degree on collegiality and leadership.

4.6.1 Teaching collaboration within a school/department

There was an acknowledged philosophy of collaboration in the Business School of institution 'A'.

> 'There is a very strong feeling here we're all together and if there is anything we can do to make different parts of our programmes work better, it's worth thinking about' (A/BS).

This had not always been the case, but the appointment of a new Head of School had resulted in notable improvements in collaborative spirit. The retirements of some disillusioned staff, and their replacement with more enthusiastic academics, had also assisted this development. Collaboration within subject groups was, therefore, high, but it was still regarded as somewhat 'patchy' between groups. There were some exchanges between groups with respect to teaching, especially on the Executive Programmes, where there was significant integration and collaboration. One academic felt that they did not collaborate enough, but he had no experience of other institutions to act as a comparison.

Similarly there was a 'fairly good' level of collaboration and co-operation within the Computer Science department of institution 'A'.

> 'Most of the staff have been around for quite a number of years and so get on reasonably well on a personal level. And there is a fairly wide discussion on how things ought to be organised in terms of the teaching, what the themes ought to be, what the

> modules ought to be, what ought to be within the particular modules in principle, and so on' (A/CS).

There was a high degree of collaboration within groups in the Business School of institution 'B'. There was a broad consensus, however, that the degree of collaboration between groups was not as high as it should be. Cross-School collaboration was individually driven, rather than centrally encouraged. A combination of factors was felt to be responsible for this, not least because of the system for group-based teaching, which allocated credit on a group basis.

The School was described by one Group Convenor not as having an anti-collaborative culture, but as having a task culture.

> 'A general rule would be there is less collaboration than there should be but you know that's life in a sense. And that's true whether it's within a group, between groups, between this department and other departments. In general we're a very task orientated bunch of people. We collaborate because the task requires you to collaborate' (Group Head: B/BS).

Both the Business School and Computer Science interviewees stated that they collaborated predominantly with academics teaching courses related to theirs. Collaboration in Computer Science was also individually driven.

A high degree of collaboration was noted in both the Business School and Computer Science department in institution 'C'. The Business School had been restructured to encourage collaboration within subject areas. All courses were collections of modules and a number of modules were cross-subject, hence academics needed to work together on course development. A high degree of openness and co-operation between divisions was noted. It was felt that Divisional Managers had been active in promoting this, particularly over the last four to five years.

There was also a fairly highly developed culture of collaboration within module teams in the Computer Science department. Approximately 90% of modules were

shared and this promoted co-operation and a 'free interchange'. Within the Department as a whole, however, one interviewee stated that there was 'virtually zero' collaboration, and another described it as 'probably matey and spasmodic rather than highly structured'. In addition, modularisation was specifically criticised for contributing to the fragmentation of courses and the consequent dehumanisation of the teaching/learning experience.

Institution 'D' provided no information on collaboration within the Computer Science subject group, though stated that there was little interaction between subject groups in the Department.

It was observed that, in general, younger staff seemed more motivated and enthusiastic in their responses. Mid-career staff and beyond were frequently the ones who commented on the perceived degradation of their working conditions. There were exceptions, in that those members of staff who had had fairly recent experience of industry or commerce and/or those in management roles appeared to be both more positive and realistic in their perceptions. As noted, the retirement of, presumably older, disillusioned staff and their replacement with younger academics was one of the factors identified as leading to improvements in collaborative spirit. Another significant factor in this was leadership at the group or departmental/school level.

4.6.2 Teaching collaboration between departments

Interviewees in institution 'A' noted limited inter-departmental collaboration, which occurred mainly through joint or combined degrees. A certain amount of cross feeding did take place on an individual level. Inter-departmental collaboration was likely to improve with the development of modularisation. Computer Science in institution 'A' had an engineering focus and interviewees noted effective collaboration with Electrical Engineering over a number of years. A significant amount of the teaching was shared, and the two divisions were now part of the same department. Computer Science ran a joint course with the Business School but commented that its relationship with the School was somewhat 'fraught'.

Both the Business School and Computer Science department in institution 'B' collaborated with other departments on joint degrees. There was little service teaching, since each aimed to source their teaching internally as far as possible. Hence inter-departmental collaboration tended to be either task-based for joint degrees, or achieved purely on an individual, personal basis. Difficulties were noted in relationships with other departments, and joint degrees were described as sometimes creating 'more pain than gain' (B/CS).

A number of subject areas were interested in combining a business element in their courses, and this had led to a significant level of collaboration between the Business School in institution 'C' and other Schools in the institution. Again this was predominantly in the form of joint degrees, though there was a certain level of service teaching. The development of a Combined Studies degree, which involved a 'pick and mix' approach, had also promoted more dialogue. Each school protected its staff and subject area, however, and some interviewees felt that there was insufficient inter-departmental collaboration.

> 'I would say it's probably a bit patchy. Probably the main reason for that is that most of the time we're pretty busy doing what we've got to do'. 'We perhaps don't have enough contact. There isn't enough cross fertilisation, but it's a very big place and it's difficult to get people together that often' (C/BS).

Two Computer Science academics noted that inter-departmental co-operation was made more difficult by the multi-site nature of institution 'C'. Awards with two main subject areas were jointly developed, though modules were frequently taught separately and administration of the award was based in one department. Hence inter-departmental collaboration was regarded as variable, though in the main relatively minimal.

There was 'disappointingly little' inter-departmental collaboration noted by the Computer Science Department of institution 'D'. This was felt to be mainly due to academics being under so much pressure that they didn't have the time for co-operative developments. Again the department was involved in joint courses and

service modules. The Subject Head commented that the institution had become 'compartmentalised' with 'no obviously central socialising area', and this was detrimental to university-wide co-operation.

4.6.3 Research collaboration

There was significant intra-group collaboration in respect to research in the Business School of institution 'A'. Certain groups produced predominantly joint publications. Co-operation between groups was much more variable and one interviewee felt that academics in the School did not collaborate enough in terms of research.

Similarly there was a noted lack of collaborative culture in the Business School of institution 'B'. Where research interests differed there was obviously difficulty in seeing where collaboration could occur. The School formally tried to promote collaboration by holding 'research days'. Active research links were noted with academics in other institutions.

Interviewees in institution 'C' noted that there was little collaborative effort in research currently. There was, however, a 'high willingness to collaborate generally', hence there was a 'great potential' for research collaboration. Institution 'D' indicated that they had a number of active research links with other institutions, even though they were working from a low research base.

4.7 Summary

The academics felt that their institutions regarded teaching as being important, but it was significantly undervalued in terms of recognition and rewards. This was despite the fact that the majority of an academic's time was spent on teaching and its related activities. Teaching had become very pressurised because of high student numbers and student: staff ratios, together with students increasingly demanding quality teaching. TQA had been valuable in raising the profile of teaching, but the RAE was regarded as more important because research continued to be valued more highly.

There had been attempts to support teaching in the institutions studied, particularly in the use of information technology. Business Schools appeared to be more innovative in their teaching methods, including the incorporation of IT. Computer Science departments appeared to use IT more for course administration than teaching per se. Research into teaching methods gained little institutional support, particularly in the pre-1992 sector, where it was not regarded as being bona fide research. Specific quality management systems such as TQM and ISO 9001 were felt to have only a marginal effect on teaching.

Promotion criteria lacked clarity in all of the institutions studied, and academics complained about changing agenda and poor promotion prospects. In the pre-1992 sector promotion was predominantly on the basis of research excellence, though the criteria were felt to be excessive. In the post-1992 sector, management responsibility was the main criterion, with research becoming increasingly significant. There was, thus, little in the way of promotion prospects for teaching, though both of the pre-1992 universities were reported as developing systems for the promotion to Senior Lectureship based on teaching excellence. Interviewees reported few rewards or incentives generally for teaching beyond professional satisfaction and the respect of colleagues.

Interviewees expressed a high degree of involvement in curricular development particularly at the module/course level. Senior staff were more involved in the co-ordination of programmatic development. Within groups there was a high degree of collaboration, whilst between groups and departments it was much more patchy. Two main reasons were given for this a) the task culture and b) the allocation of teaching credit to groups, which encouraged them to source their teaching internally. There was a higher degree of collaboration on modular schemes and joint courses. The head of a group or department appeared to have a significant role to play in the development of a collaborative culture and, thus, in enhancing collegiality.

Chapter 5: University Quality Assurance

Two main aspects are involved in the assurance of the quality of teaching in universities. These include the assurance of the quality of the academic staff with respect to their teaching role, together with the incorporation of feedback such as that provided by the primary 'customer', the students, with input from external agents such as external examiners and employers.

In this chapter, the academics' views on the evaluation of teaching quality generally are explored, with reference to specific aspects of their institution's quality assurance systems. Policies and procedures with respect to recruitment, induction, mentoring, appraisal and staff development are examined as a further indication of the status of, and level of institutional support for, teaching. Academics' views on the relevance of teaching qualifications are also sought, together with their perceptions as to the effectiveness of student feedback and external examiner systems, and accreditation where applicable. Industrial involvement is discussed briefly in chapter 4.

5.1 Can Teaching Quality be Assessed?

Interviewees in the study were asked whether, in their view, teaching quality could be assessed. For the most part, academics felt that teaching quality could be assessed, though they expressed their reservations as to the effectiveness of the methods currently employed. There appeared to be no significant differences between institutions in their responses to this question.

Only one academic (B/BS) adopted a philosophical approach, referring to *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and to Aristotle. He stated that the essence of quality was that it could not be measured, but that you could measure skills.

> 'And skills you can help people develop. Whether that's quality or not is another question' (Group Head:B/BS).

He felt that there were great teachers, and that 'great teachers often break the rules'. The potential stifling of innovation by over-prescribing, was regarded as a danger associated with quality assessment.

The need for continuous improvement of teaching quality and the lack of any measurement of this aspect was also raised. A similar issue was noted in the CHES (Centre for Higher Education Studies) evaluation of TQA, in which Barnett et al (1994) stated that:

> 'The quality improvement component of visits should be developed so as to yield, in each visit report, a systematic set of recommendations for improving the programmes in the department being reviewed' (Barnett et al 1994:5).

Another academic noted, it was possible to define minimum standards and ensure that specified criteria were followed (B/CS). It was, thus, feasible to measure conformance to specifications, but whether this was a measure of quality was another issue. The distinction between standards, criteria and quality has been discussed by Moodie (1988). Moodie emphasised that 'quality ' was not the same as meeting high standards and that the criteria for deciding whether a standard was met might well diverge from those appropriate to judgements of quality (Moodie 1988).

Another issue raised was that it was possible to provide a measure of 'fitness for purpose' provided that the 'purpose' could be ascertained with any clarity.

> 'If you're thinking in terms of fitness for purpose, I think it can to some extent but it's never going to be an absolute assessment. But I think you can assess that something is probably adequate or good for the purpose that was concerned. But you see there were so many different ideas what the purpose would be' (C/CS).

A number of writers (e.g. Reynolds 1986, Barnett 1992) agree that higher education is a contested concept, hence the approaches to assessing it would differ according to what were regarded as its fundamental purposes.

One interviewee noted that the models currently used measured short term teaching outputs rather than teaching quality, which was more long term. The academic felt that it was possible to both identify poor teaching, and to measure certain aspects of teaching performance. It was not possible, however, to quantify teaching 'quality' with any degree of accuracy, and therefore, it could only provide a crude assessment.

Despite the reservations and limitations, interviewees did, for the most part, think that it was worth while trying to put a value on teaching performance. This would effectively be an assessment of preparedness and delivery, or as one stated, 'it comes down to style and partly to the entertainment factor' (B/BS). They did not believe that external assessment was the best method. Not only was it an artificial procedure, which was felt to skew the process, but it also resulted in the perception of control, which was counter productive. In addition it was regarded as not being cost effective.

One interviewee (A/CS) raised the issue that academics should be treated as independent professionals. Their competency should be assured at the commencement of their teaching, and that their judgement and self-evaluative nature should be trusted after that. In addition there were internal procedures of quality assurance, which included student feedback. Despite the limitations and imperfections of student feedback, and the difficulties associated with the concept of students as customers, it was felt that there was reasonable agreement between student feedback and informal knowledge of colleagues' teaching.

> 'You've got different levels of quality, I think. There is the quality which is the subjective response of the students, which is important you know, did they enjoy the course. But of course they might have enjoyed it but they might have learnt nothing. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's good quality. So maybe I'm the better judge of quality in terms of the content and, ultimately, industry in terms of value added, which is difficult to measure. So I don't think it's an easy thing to measure, but I think it's worth attempting to measure different aspects, as long as you recognise the limitations of what you're measuring' (A/BS).

> 'I suppose yes, of course it can, imperfectly. It is easy to evaluate the extremes of teaching quality, and there's usually a reasonable amount of consonance between student evaluation and colleagues whispered evaluation or informal knowledge about their own and their colleagues teaching' (B/BS).

The effectiveness of student feedback will be discussed further in 5.6. In summary, academics felt that student evaluation systems were not well developed, were punishment-centred, and the results obtained were not that informative. Despite these reservations, however, they believed that student feedback was beneficial in that it did identify gross inadequacies and/or specific strengths.

5.2 Assuring the Quality of Staff – Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment processes of the departments concerned were examined with a view to establishing how they ensured that the applicants could teach effectively on appointment. Recruitment procedures usually incorporated the initial application detailing previous experience and achievement, informal discussions, a presentation (s), an interview and utilisation of references.

5.2.1 Research and/or Teaching Presentation

The inclusion of a presentation in the recruitment process was relatively new. All of the departments in the study had introduced at least one presentation with either a teaching or research orientation. There were still some members of staff who were omitted from this process. On recruitment, Teaching Fellows in institution A, did not have to prepare a presentation. The same applied to a temporary lecturer in the Computer Science department of institution B. On appointment to a permanent lectureship post in the institution concerned a presentation was not necessarily expected, since there was an awareness of their teaching ability.

Staff who had been in post for some time had often escaped the presentation process.

'It was assumed that in terms of my qualifications and interests, I would be good at teaching. There was no attempt then to get people to present a seminar' (A/BS).

'Just an interview and did you have the right academic background' (A/CS).

For these members of staff, there had been a reliance on academic qualifications in the pre-1992 universities, and teaching and/or industrial experience in post-1992 institutions.

The inclusion of a presentation was not necessarily a university requirement. In institution A, those short-listed for a Business School post would be expected to present a research seminar, to give an indication primarily of their research interests. It would also provide an opportunity to judge their communication/presentation skills. In the Computer Science department of institution A, a research seminar was usually required, but on a more informal basis.

'I don't know that it's formally part of the recruitment process, but it's quite common to ask someone to come and give a research seminar, or a seminar to a group of people in the department that they are going to be working in, so that they find out a bit more about them. But I don't think it's part of the university policy for recruitment' (A/CS).

A research seminar was encouraged in institution B though this was, for the most part, at the department's discretion. The Business School required two presentations, one of which was a short teaching simulation.

'We now ask staff to give a twenty minute extract from a lecture, and then twenty minutes to tell us about their research interests and plans. We try in a sense to have a snapshot picture of teaching in action, and a discussion which obviously adds to the written applications of their research plans' (B/BS).

Professorial appointments followed the university procedure, which did not require a presentation because 'there's this wonderful belief that professors must be able to teach because they wouldn't be potential professors otherwise' (B/BS).

The Computer Science department of institution B organised research seminars for short-listed applicants. This did provide some information on communication ability, but was primarily to look at an applicant's research interests. Again, professorial appointments were excluded from this process.

The post-1992 universities organised teaching simulations as part of their recruitment process. Short-listed candidates would be given a selection of topics or allowed to choose their own, and asked to present it to a given level of student. The purpose was to assess the applicant's communication capability.

> 'And not only did we make them give a presentation but we asked them questions. So we actually put them in role. That means that they can communicate orally successfully' (C/CS)

> 'There's always a presentation part of the process and everybody in the division will be involved in assessing that. They get involved in talking about research and scholarly activity'. 'Even if they are major research people that we are looking for, they're going to still have to do a lot of teaching. So teaching is still the main thing' (Division Head: C/BS).

There was some doubt as to whether performance in the presentation carried much weight overall, however, because of some 'hidden agenda' (C/CS). One group head acknowledged that they made 'very little attempt to ensure that people are good teachers' (C/BS).

The Computer Science department in institution D reported that they were discouraged by the institution from requiring a presentation, because they 'were told it wasn't fair'. The department continued to expect short-listed applicants to give a teaching simulation however.

This apparent lack of concern at institutional level on the need for, and value of, a presentation as part of the recruitment process could be a further indication of the

relative lack of status and recognition of university teaching. It also confirms the finding in chapter 4 that at school, department or divisional level, teaching was regarded as having a higher priority than at institutional level.

5.2.2. Qualifications and Experience

Other than a presentation, institutions relied on what the applicant told them about their teaching capability, via their curriculum vitae and interview. References were requested and these sometimes included comments on teaching ability. One academic (B/BS) noted that they might discuss curriculum development at interview. Two academics (A/BS) stated that they had been asked, at interview, about their approach to teaching. One of these also kept a teaching portfolio, which included student feedback and general evaluation of her teaching. This, however, was not the norm.

Most academics stated that the interview panel had relied on their qualifications and experience. Pre-1992 institutions paid most attention to academic qualifications, though they also noted prior experience of teaching or training. Post-1992 institutions focused on an applicant's industrial/commercial background, together with evidence of teaching or training experience. The interview process might, additionally, be informed by an 'evidence gathering' process involving informal discussions with colleagues, which could also include aspects related to teaching. None of the academics reported that there had been any focus on teaching qualifications during the recruitment process, again indicating either the lack of status of teaching in higher education or a lack of confidence in the teaching qualifications currently available.

5.3 Assuring the Quality of Staff - Support and Appraisal

On-going support procedures were in evidence following recruitment. These included induction, mentoring, appraisal and staff development. The academics' were questioned as to their experience of such procedures, including their perceptions of the effectiveness of them in relation to improving teaching in higher education.

5.3.1 Induction

Interviewees had only a vague knowledge of the induction procedure in their institution, in terms of both the length of the induction course, which appeared to vary from one day to one week, and what it contained. It was generally agreed, however, that induction focused more on the institution i.e. on its library and computing facilities and registry system, rather than on teaching methods.

> 'We've always had an induction process, but it certainly doesn't consist of a systematic approach for helping new staff to become better teachers and facilitators. It has some small elements of that'. ' It was more or less an institutional induction. It certainly wasn't a learning oriented, a learning methods induction' (A/BS).

For the most part, departments relied on their institutional induction procedure, though there might have been informal departmental induction, which basically included showing the new member of staff around the department.

> 'There was no School induction programme. I mean my induction was really done by a senior member of staff who showed me my office, welcomed me to the School, took me to lunch, you know said, I'm here if you've got any questions, that sort of thing. It was very informal' (B/BS).

One academic reported that a member of staff was given a time-tabled 'allowance' to guide new staff around (C/CS). Information booklets were available in some departments.

Attendance on an induction course was voluntary. If induction was held during the first weeks of the teaching year, it might be missed because of teaching commitments. It might also not be repeated until the next year and so not be available for staff commencing employment later in the academic year.

5.3.2 Mentoring

Informal mentoring systems were in place in the departments involved in the study. The effectiveness of the procedure would vary between groups within schools/departments, as well as between departments and institutions.

Institution A did not have a specific policy with respect to mentoring, and it was left very much to individual departments as to how much effort was made to support new members of staff.

> 'The impression that I get is that there never has really been a formalised system, which has actually been developed properly. There have been attempts at it. I know there was an arrangement where new members of staff were given a mentor who had responsibility for helping develop their teaching and academic skills. It's interesting that I'm having to think quite hard to recall it. That's partly because it's over a long period, but it's also because it isn't clearly built into the system as a structure which is rewarded' (A/BS).

This member of staff concluded that there was an 'informal, spasmodic, half organised recognition that mentoring might be important, but it is not formalised' (A/BS). Another commented that he would have found mentoring useful, but he didn't have that luxury when he commenced his post. Informally, new staff could approach another member of staff for advice.

Institution B encouraged mentoring, but the system was patchy, and varied within and between departments.

> 'Mentoring varies hugely between groups. Some groups are far better at it than others. So it's patchy. I think the mentoring side is better than the induction because in mentoring you have both the senior member responsible, which is usually a professor in your own group and, in addition to the senior member responsible, we have the appraiser as well, so a senior member of staff outside the group. And that acts as a nice safety net' (B/BS).

The Business School, thus, allocated a senior staff member to more junior staff. For probationary staff, the senior member of staff was also their appraiser. This combination of their mentor being their appraiser was regarded as not being ideal, but was done in order to comply with university requirements. They felt that in doing this they had, in fact, lost some of the mentoring aspect of their original system. Staff could also informally use another colleague as a 'sounding board' if they wished. In the Computer Science department members of staff were nominally allocated a mentor, though the role of the mentor was regarded as being very informal, and the system might not be extended to temporary staff.

A mentoring system was in operation in institution C, though predominantly for staff in their probationary year. One academic stated that she hadn't used the mentoring system and couldn't remember who her mentor was, 'which would indicate perhaps how significant that role was and perhaps is' (C/BS). In the Computer Science department mentors were given an allowance for introducing new staff to the university's requirements and generally keeping an eye on them. Staff shared offices so informal mentoring was in operation also. The sharing-an-office approach was the only form of mentoring reported in institution D.

Staff support mechanisms appeared to be at an early stage of development in all of the institutions studied, particularly in the Computer Science departments compared to the Business Schools. Institution 'C' had introduced Investors in People (IIP) and this would, as the evidence suggests, involve a more people-centred approach and hence a greater awareness of staff support procedures. The effectiveness of such procedures was, however, questionable.

5.3.3 Appraisal

Appraisal operated spasmodically and unevenly within and between the institutions involved in the study. The Business School of institution A still undertook appraisals annually, for the most part. Appraisals were regarded as being geared more towards career development than teaching development.

'Formally, yes we do. We didn't like the appraisal scheme we got here. Eventually we more or less agreed to it'. 'In my own experience, I think I've had an appraisal probably six out of eight years. In fact in most instances it's been quite fruitful for me just to sit down with the Head of Group and go through, you know, what went wrong and what you're doing next year in a sense. It's not clear how separate that (developmental) is from the process of really performance reward. Formally it's supposed to be quite separate' (A/BS).

In the Computer Science department, however, there was a nominal appraisal system but it was 'dysfunctional in practice', and no one in the group had been appraised in the last three years.

Institution B was committed to a formal appraisal system. The frequency of the appraisals depended on whether the member of staff was still on probation. The Business School also operated an annual reporting process. Hence there was some confusion as to whether the responses referred to appraisal or annual reporting. It was felt that appraisal was allocated a low priority, other than in the case of probationary staff, partly because of the annual reporting procedure. The effectiveness of appraisal/annual reporting was regarded as depending enormously on individual commitment.

'Well it depends really who your senior designated member is. Obviously some people are better managers than others, some people are better at giving feedback, which is useful for improvement, than others are. Therefore there should be formal training so that everybody gets to a certain threshold of competence in this area, and there have been sort of workshops introduced' (B/BS).

One group head noted that he had always been unhappy that the procedure incorporated little data on teaching performance.

The Computer Science department of institution B also operated an appraisal system, though somewhat reluctantly, in response to university policy. Generally the feeling

was that appraisal was not particularly useful in that it was not properly used within the promotion procedures, nor was information fed back into the system so that resources could be better targeted.

As part of the commitment to ISO 9001 and Investors in People (IIP), Institution C had maintained its appraisal system. Originally it was performance related and academics were generally suspicious of the process. The focus had changed to being developmental and some staff now thought it was a waste of time. Others found it useful and constructive to have the opportunity to talk to their appraiser, set objectives and relate what it was they would like to do. Certain aspects of bureaucracy did colour some people's feelings about engaging in the appraisal process. Some felt that the absence of a link with a career structure, together with the lack of influence on resources to make necessary changes to the working environment, led to a jaundiced view of appraisal. One academic noted that it was largely a paper exercise to satisfy the ISO 9001 standards adding:

> 'The primary concern of those above me is have the appraisals been done. Whether or not they've been of any use, they're not really bothered about' (C/CS).

Formally, institution D had adopted an annual appraisal system, which was purported to be developmental. As there were few resources to back up identified developmental needs, however, some staff regarded appraisal as being useful only as a 'venting procedure'.

As Schofield (1989) noted, the strong emphasis on personal and professional autonomy in higher educational institutions could represent special difficulties for appraisal. The main problems identified in the study, however, appeared to be a lack of clarity as to the purposes of appraisal, together with the limited career development opportunities available to academics. Both appraisor and appraisee awareness of, and commitment to, the appraisal process were essential for it to work effectively.

5.3.4 Training and Development

A staff development unit was in operation in institution A. Views as to its status and credibility, and the quality of in-house courses were mixed. Resources were limited but were generally available for what were described as 'technical' courses e.g. training in IT. Information was also made available on regionally-based courses. There was, thus, encouragement to undertake training and development opportunities, but institutional pressures worked as a deterrent.

> 'Although there is a staff development function and it does provide some opportunities, it's very much up to individuals whether they make any move to take advantage of those, and in my opinion the institutional pressures discourage individuals from taking up even whatever is on offer' (C/CS).

There was also nothing systematic in the university in terms of progressive staff development opportunities. It was 'much more piecemeal', appearing 'reasonable and helpful' but was 'relatively bitty' (A/BS).

Institution B also had a staff development unit, which organised a variety of mandatory and voluntary courses. Staff were encouraged to attend, but there was some doubt as to the relevance of certain courses. The main deterrent noted was the lack of time to attend.

> 'Anyway, got this stuff in the mail in October ... saying mandatory teaching development programme. There was all this good stuff and I was in the middle of a teaching year, no time at all, no time to do any teaching development. So there I'm aware of it but it's unrealistic. I've never had the opportunity to make use of it' (B/BS).

In addition, the Business School offered a personal development allowance to staff to attend external courses of their choice. This was regarded as an innovative system, administered with a 'light touch'.

Staff development was encouraged in institution C, but again the main problem was lack of time:

> 'Although they (the staff) might be willing to commit themselves to receive staff development, often we just haven't been able to get out from under the workload to go and take time off' (Group Head: C/BS).

There was a full corporate staff development programme, though it was described as being reactive and relatively unstructured. It was also mostly skills based. Some, but 'probably not enough' of the programme related to teaching techniques (C/CS). An MA in Teaching and Learning had also been introduced, and all new staff had to take certain modules unless they had appropriate teaching experience. Staff were also encouraged, budget permitting, to attend external courses and conferences.

There were differing views as to the availability of courses in institution D. The Head of Subject reported that staff were encouraged to go on workshops run by the 'keen people' in the Educational Development unit. One interviewee stated, however, that he had identified, at appraisal, certain courses that he felt were vital to his staff development, but these had not been made available to him. Lack of time, was noted by another academic as the main reason for not undertaking staff development opportunities. Funding was reported to be available for staff to present papers at conferences.

What purported to be staff development in the institutions involved in the study, appeared in the main to be little more than skills training. Again career development was not in evidence, further confirming the apparent lack of career opportunities for academic staff.

5.3.5 Sabbaticals and Secondments

The entitlement to sabbaticals was reported to be written into the charter of institution A. Despite this, sabbaticals had become increasingly rare, having 'degenerated into a process of negotiation and become departmentalised' (A/BS). Effectively staff had to

obtain cover for their teaching in order to be able to take a sabbatical. With high student:staff ratios, finding teaching cover was very problematic. Earned income could be used for university-related work, such as funding for replacement teaching. The Business School, therefore, were trying to re-establish sabbaticals using earned income, but it was still on a fairly minimalist basis. The Business School reported that two out of the eighty staff were currently on sabbatical.

Computer Science stated that in principle there were sabbaticals, but that no one had taken one in their department in the last four or five years, because of their staffing position.

> 'Well here there aren't any because we are grossly under-staffed. The only way I can get a sabbatical is if I ask someone to do at least the one semester when I only have one module, and I could do one of his. And so we might get a term off, but there is no formal system' (A/CS).

Institution B was relatively generous in terms of the availability of sabbaticals. After six terms, staff could apply to have one term off on sabbatical. One academic, however, reported that the procedure had become increasingly interventionist. He had had to rewrite the application twice before his case was accepted. Formally it was believed that the university allowed sabbaticals to be used for teaching development. In practice academics doubted whether a case based on teaching development, would be accepted. This was felt to devalue teaching (B/BS). Staff shortages in Computer Science meant that obtaining sabbaticals was difficult particularly for middle ranking staff. 'High flying research colleagues' would tend to be more successful in applying for a sabbatical.

Sabbaticals in the conventional sense were not available in the post-1992 institutions. Secondments to industry were possible in both institutions C and D, providing that funding could be brought in to cover the teaching. In some instances, study leave had been allocated to staff in the Business School of institution C, to pump-prime a PhD. When the study leave had not enabled the individual to produce the 'deliverables' e.g.

a PhD thesis, or research papers and/or publications, the process became discredited and the system had been reviewed.

> 'There have been sabbaticals up to now which have been limited to research and two colleagues of mine, in the last three years, have had six months or say one semester sabbaticals to underpin their research. But the world is changing a little bit because sometimes sabbaticals haven't actually enabled the individuals to fully deliver what they should, and the options for sabbaticals in a sense have been transferred into say a research centre. The sort of idea of going for twelve months in the States, I think that world has gone. I don't think there is the conventional concept of the sabbatical anymore' (C/BS).

A few staff had taken a year off from the Computer Science department of institution C to do research or work in industry, but there was tendency for them to be offered posts elsewhere during this time.

Though there were the occasional opportunities for secondments in institution D, staff were reported as being reluctant to take them because of difficulties in returning to teaching. This was reported to have been described by the Vice Chancellor of institution D, as the 'difficulties of re-entry'.

Sabbaticals and/or study leave could provide a welcome opportunity for an academic to refresh following an intensive period of teaching. The availability of sabbaticals was, however, very limited in the institutions studied. Institution 'B' appeared to be the most generous in making sabbaticals available, but only for the purposes of developing one's research. This was a further indication of the apparent lack of status of teaching.

5.4 Are Teaching Qualifications Necessary?

As discussed in chapter 3, eight academics in the interview sample had a teaching qualification, predominantly a PGCE. In section 5.2.2 it was noted, however, that none of the respondents reported that any attention had been paid to teaching

qualifications when they were appointed. In this section, therefore, the academics' personal views as to the necessity of teaching qualifications for professional status and credibility were sought.

Five of the interview sample (two from pre-1992 and three from post-1992 institutions) thought that it was essential or increasingly necessary for academics to have a teaching qualification. Three of these already had a teaching qualification. The reasons given were the need for proper initial development of teachers in higher education, and to ensure that all teachers were at least 'passable' in teaching in the increasingly complex higher education environment. The issue of credibility was also raised, though this was not regarded as the main consideration.

> 'I don't think they're important for credibility. I think they are important for the quality of the teaching we give to our course participants'. ' I think the development of a proper teaching development process which starts off with a professional qualification and moves through mentoring is absolutely incredibly important' (A/BS).

Four interviewees felt that a teaching qualification was not strictly necessary, since this did not ensure teaching competency and also diverted effort from development of the subject area. In addition, twelve academics believed, though with some reservations, that a teaching qualification was advisable.

A number of interviewees acknowledged that teaching quality was variable, and it would be beneficial from the students' point of view for academics to provide some evidence of competency in teaching in higher education.

> 'I don't think that it is necessarily necessary to have teaching qualifications. However, I would like myself to get a teaching qualification, and I think from the students' point of view it would probably be a good idea because, I think, the quality of teaching does vary very much on an individual basis. And, although the content will be good, and that's where the professionalism comes in, but its how you impart that content that will fluctuate. And probably that's where certain lecturers need more help' (A/BS).

Anything that contributed to the improvement of teaching was to be commended and encouraged. Appointments in pre-1992 institutions in particular were made on the basis of excellence in research, and it was acknowledged that the 'glittering stars' in research, were not necessarily good at teaching (B/BS). It was felt that the requirement for a teaching qualification would ensure at least basic teaching competence.

The need to provide a 'basic toolkit' (C/CS) for new staff to assist their confidence when they first entered the classroom was also noted. One academic in a pre-1992 institution stated that he was surprised at how little guidance he was given on teaching methods, before he was put in front of students. Another commented that, without training, most academics would teach in a similar way to how they were taught i.e. without regard for the full range of tools and operations that were available. It was important, therefore, in the increasing complexity of higher education teaching, that academics were exposed to different teaching styles and methods.

One interviewee (post-1992) believed that it was necessary for academics to have an understanding of the learning process in order to optimise their teaching.

> 'I certainly think it helps to have a thorough understanding of how students learn. I don't think you could be that effective unless you really understood the learning process. I suspect many tutors get to understand it through their experience and activities, but I think maybe there ought to be short programmes. I think it really is very important' (C/BS).

Whilst most academics acknowledged that having a basic training in the operational side of teaching i.e. in communication skills and management of groups was beneficial, it was unusual for interviewees to identify a need for an understanding of learning theory. Two interviewees (pre-1992 and post-1992 Business Schools), raised the issue of the dichotomy between what they taught their students and how they applied it to their situation. One felt that she found it 'quite extraordinary that our business is qualifications and yet we so belittle qualifications for ourselves' (C/BS). The other expressed it as being 'interesting that we are in a place which spends a lot

of time talking about the need for professionalism, yet actually in this area none of us is trained' (Group Head:B/BS).

Those who had reservations about the need for teaching qualifications gave a variety of reasons. The 'mixed profession' of teaching and research, where research was valued more highly, was regarded as a major reason for being 'not willing to put in more than the minimum requirement on teaching' (A/BS). One academic stated that he did not regard himself as a professional teacher.

> 'I am very reluctant to go and do a teacher training course because I just feel it would be a lot of effort for me when it's not the main focus of my work; it's part of my work. And I do not consider myself to be a professional teacher and I never will' (A/BS).

Academics were currently assessed on the quality of research and the quantity of teaching. There was a belief, however, that the quality of teaching could gain more attention in the future, in response to the Dearing Committee's recommendations (see 7.4). In the absence of recognition and rewards for teaching development, however, there would always be a reluctance to gain teaching qualifications or attend teaching courses.

Concerns were expressed about the 'trade-off' between the development of teaching, and the development of the subject area. It was felt that attending teaching courses could divert too much time from the development of subject discipline. It was proposed, therefore, that assistance should be made available predominantly for remedial purposes.

> 'I think it would be dangerous to say I think that they're not desirable. I think it's a timing thing'. 'My view would be that we should provide assistance and training in teaching to the extent that it is needed for remedial purposes. I think that if we are going to train people in terms of the philosophy of education, or in the background to what they're doing then, to some extent, I worry about the trade-offs between that activity and the activity of developing their own discipline' (Group Head: B/BS).

Having in-depth knowledge and experience of the subject was felt to be far more important, than having a teaching qualification. As one interviewee commented, academics prided themselves on content rather than style of delivery. One interviewee felt that it was necessary to experience teaching in order to know what it was about. This theme of teaching as an apprenticeship was echoed by two other academics.

> 'So to some extent I think you should be careful because the difference that I see between the university and almost anything else is that it's apprenticeship to some extent' (A/CS).

Another interviewee (C/BS) believed that as long as there was a procedure in place to pick up problems (e.g. student feedback) and the means for taking remedial action, there was no need for initial teaching qualifications. Others regarded teaching as a natural skill, stating that teachers were born rather than made, similar to the acting profession. Even so, if was felt that this natural skill could be enhanced to a certain extent.

> 'I think there is always scope for training. And even people who have a natural gift for it can also improve through training'. 'I think I would support making a certain amount of training, how much and the nature of the training is for debate, but a certain amount of training as being obligatory for an academic' (B/BS).

A major concern was the lack of appropriate courses available for the development of teaching in higher education. Some felt that they were too theoretical. One interviewee stated that the basis of qualification was largely an acknowledgement that one had some grasp of a body of knowledge, but it didn't confirm competent delivery of the subject. A PGCE was felt to be not particularly appropriate to prepare academics for university teaching.

> 'In terms of the teaching qualification, it's not so much like a PGCE. It wouldn't be something like that which would be of use to an academic lecturer. It would be maybe communication skills perhaps, or some kind of more formalised peer reviewing session resulting in some kind of qualification, rather than what is available at the moment. I think

there is an MA in Teaching and Learning, things like that which may be relevant. But it's not really the content that you're talking about, it's just how you impart the information and keeping the students motivated and the management of groups that are more relevant to university lecturers' (A/BS).

Alternative approaches would be to pay more attention to include teaching in induction courses and/or run courses on a part time basis during the first two or three years of a teaching appointment. One senior academic felt that teaching ability should play a greater part in the assessment of academics for continued appointments.

There was broad agreement that training in the development of skills, honed to the needs of higher education, was more important than a teaching qualification. As one academic, who had a teaching qualification, noted, there was always scope for training and she would support making a certain amount of training obligatory. A training course on teaching methods at the start of an academic appointment would help to develop an academic's confidence and an understanding of his/her role, as well as providing basic skills. On-going training should be available for continual professional development and/or for remedial purposes. Training courses could provide not only the basics of good practice, but also introduce academics to a wide range of tools and teaching styles, and an appropriate level of learning theory. It was acknowledged, however, that once in the system it was difficult to find time for training activities. It was imperative, therefore, that universities regarded training as a bona fide activity, and allowed academics time to undertake training courses.

Interviewees from three of the institutions in the study confirmed that their university was introducing training courses, particularly for new lecturers.

'I know that 'B' now is promoting this in-service course called 'B' Teaching Certificate. It's going to be interesting to see what effect that has on the people who take it and the general perception within the university of teaching quality' (B/CS).

'I'm now involved in the university-wide MEd, I think it is, in Teaching and Learning. And I think I'm one of the people who was very caustic about it when it arrived, when I was an outsider' (C/CS).

'All new teachers are encouraged, that is required to attend a series of briefings and lessons on teaching and learning and assessment processes. And we run a certificate course which they can enjoy. And we're also making that available to experienced teachers as a postgraduate qualification' (Division Head:D/CS).

5.5 Recommendations to New Academics

Interviewees were asked what recommendations they would make to academics who were new to teaching in higher education. Apart from four responses not recommending academia as a profession at all, the advice could be grouped into a) subject knowledge and preparation b) delivery c) learning from peers d) training and development opportunities e) enjoyment and self-preservation and f) reflection and career development.

(a) Three academics identified depth and breadth of subject knowledge as being important, whilst another four interviewees emphasised thorough preparation of subject matter. Three academics (all post-1992) stated that industrial/commercial experience was useful, in that the academic could draw on real life situations.

(b) Basic presentation or communication skills were emphasised by five academics, whilst one advised breaking up teaching sessions to maintain interest. Two interviewees recommended establishing the students' level of awareness and promoting understanding and independent thought. One academic felt it was important to have a sense of humour and respect for the students.

(c) Viewing other teachers during their teaching, particularly academics acknowledged as being good teachers, and learning from their experience was recommended by five academics. Three advised working with effective teachers, possibly in a team teaching role.

(d) Eight advised undertaking some form of training, two of these recommended having a mentor, whilst a third felt that a professional qualification was important as well as making the most of an induction programme. One academic stated that an awareness of learning theory was useful.

(e) Two interviewees recommended aiming to teach only what one researched, enjoyed and/or believed in. One of these felt it was important to 'have fun'. The other advised a more functional view of teaching in order to 'survive'. Three felt it was important for a new academic to manage their own learning of teaching, to nurture his/her strengths, be realistic, honest and have self respect. Another felt that it would be necessary for an academic from industry to have to prepare for the culture shock of academia.

(f) Reflecting on teaching was advised by two academics, who felt that teaching should be taken seriously. One also felt that reflecting on the new academic's undergraduate and postgraduate experience of teaching was helpful. Five interviewees, however, recommended not worrying about teaching, but concentrating on research. One of these also advised trying to avoid administrative responsibilities as far as possible. One interviewee felt that establishing the ground rules in their particular institution i.e. what was recognised and valued, would be beneficial. Two academics stated it was important to have a career aim, and to manage their teaching responsibilities with this in mind.

5.6 Students as Customers

The difficulties of students being able to assess the quality of the education they receive has been acknowledged (Williams and Loder 1990), but it is recognised that they are able to make judgements on some aspects of the process including teaching methods (Ellis 1993). Student feedback, therefore, usually forms a significant part of the quality management system in higher education.

All of the institutions in the study had student feedback mechanisms in operation. These included (a) student feedback questionnaires (b) student representatives on departmental committees e.g. Staff-Student Liaison Committees and/or Boards of Study and (c) informal feedback mechanisms, both internal and external to the classroom.

5.6.1 Student Feedback Questionnaires

Student feedback questionnaires were the standard routine mechanism for the collection of formal feedback on every module in the institutions involved in the study. It was the policy in all of the institutions that there should be a thorough system of evaluation of programmes in place. In many cases, interviewees stated that they used to use student feedback questionnaires before it became a university requirement. Questionnaires were usually distributed during the last or penultimate week of a module i.e. provided summative feedback. For courses that spanned the entire year, student feedback was usually required at the end of every term. One institution (C) experimented unsuccessfully with a postal survey to all of their students. One computer science department (A/CS) operated a web-based student feedback system, which automatically provided a summary of the results. Another (C/CS) used optical mark readable cards to assist analysis.

The forms usually comprised one or two sides of A4 with statements requiring the assignment of a numerical grade, plus space for individual comments. In some instances, academics designed their own questionnaire to distribute to students during the course, in order to obtain formative feedback.

> 'I try to do it twice per course; I try to give out questionnaires. And I do this myself, I don't use the departmental format but it's pretty much the same. And I do it twice, once in the middle of the course, so that I can try to make any changes while things are still happening, and once again so that I can gain an overall view' (B/CS).

Institution B adopted this approach as standard for their MBA courses. Analysis was usually carried out centrally within the School or Department and the results fed back

to the individual academic and possibly his/her line manager i.e. Head of Group or Department. In the case of the web-based system, the results were made available to all of the academics in the department.

Whilst recognising the benefits of the student feedback questionnaire system 'in a policing sort of way', academics expressed many doubts as to its effectiveness. They stated that the system was not necessarily well developed and that it was tolerant of poor teaching. The questionnaires were not that rigorous and the results were rather vague. The summary usually showed a normal distribution, which was not that informative.

> 'The statistics that always come out show that people fall into the category four, which means that they were happy with the module. That's always the median grouping. Now because it's the median grouping it tells you that this thing is not much use really. (C/CS).

The academics interviewed also commented that response rates were generally poor and students suffered from 'questionnaire fatigue'.

> "It's not very well used by students, I'm sorry to say. Without incentives only about ten to twenty per cent of a class will usually fill in a form' (B/BS).

> 'The students have got questionnaire fatigue within about the first semester. And they've probably cottoned on to the fact that most of the things that they'd like to complain about are not going to make very much difference' (C/CS).

The students who did respond tended to be those who were critical, dissatisfied or had a grievance and were not regarded as being truly representative of the student body as a whole. Courses would, thus, be 'marked down' if they were regarded as being unexciting or difficult.

'If you're asked to fill in a customer satisfaction survey you know you're more likely to fill it in if you were dissatisfied. There is a lot of market research that suggests that, but I have my doubts sometimes how useful some of this is' (B/BS).

'The only feedback from students who really fill forms in are the ones who either have got a grievance, hate the teacher for some reason or another, and the rest of it sinks into why stir up apathy' (C/BS).

In many cases the comments focused on physical/resources issues rather than teaching performance. Often, therefore, students were complaining about something that the academic could do little about. As the system was slow to react, it appeared that staff were being unresponsive.

In none of the departments/schools studied were the results made available to the students, and this could, according to *Learning from Audit* (1994) contribute to the poor return rates noted. Interviewees also perceived the student feedback questionnaire system to be punishment centred, rather than performance enhancing.

'I'm aware that the system is not very well developed. I think it is actually quite difficult to get a good student evaluation system which is actually positive in allowing students to say what they think about courses, but works in a way that is positive in terms of improving delivery rather than being seen as punitive or controlling and assessing device'. 'There is some quite delicate stuff about how you deal with student complaints about a particular lecturer or lecturing or institutional arrangement of examining, or the room or whatever. In many instances, it should be dealt with directly by the students and the lecturer. But, of course, if things are going really wrong, students are reluctant to do that (A/BS).

One group head specifically commented on the difficulties of assisting staff to cope with negative evaluations. Rights of access to the information was also a sensitive issue. Overall, however, it was felt that the system was capable of showing up gross inadequacies and also identifying particular strengths. Despite the scepticisms, therefore, the system was regarded by many as being beneficial.

5.6.2 Other Student Feedback Mechanisms

The use of module/course feedback questionnaires was one of the main ways of obtaining student feedback. Another was via committees such as the Staff-Student liaison committee. In the institutions studied, Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings would meet regularly once or twice per term/semester and, in addition, when a student wished to call one extraordinarily. Minutes would be taken and made available to all students. Such committees were compulsory in the institutions studied, were very active and were taken very seriously. It was felt that, in general, these were more intimidating than the student feedback questionnaires. Feedback from these committees was regarded as useful but they still tended to be 'moaning shops', pre-occupied to a large extent on physical/resource issues. The SSLC system was also slightly punishment centred and staff were occasionally apprehensive about the issues which might be raised.

In most, but not all, Departments/Schools in the study, students were also represented on the Boards of Study i.e. award meetings, School or Departmental meetings. It was felt that they did raise valuable issues, which had not been raised elsewhere. In some instances, however, it was regarded as unfortunate that the students had not raised the issue directly with the member of staff concerned. Dealing with certain sensitive issues in such a meeting required a high degree of diplomacy.

In addition to the formal feedback mechanisms, students were able to contribute in an informal manner either in class to the course organiser, or privately to the course organiser or their personal tutor. Some staff actively sought informal feedback, whilst others found it more difficult and embarrassing.

'Personally, I quite like and make an effort to get more informal feedback usually in the last couple of seminars. I'm sufficiently confident now to say 'well ok how did I screw up this time'? You know you do get that, you do get reasonable feedback from that' (A/BS).

'I find it quite difficult because I always think it can be quite embarassing for the students and although some characters will carry it off, I'm not the sort of character who can ask it

in the way that will get a really good response. But I would like it and would encourage it. I have asked a bit in the past' (A/BS).

Many staff felt that they knew instinctively how well the lecture or seminar was received and/or were confident that their students would tell them if everything was not going well. Issues raised were usually to do with pace and presentation.

'I think in seminars and in other contacts with students I'd have a fairly good idea about which students are basically bored with the course, which students are excited, which ones are in-between, and to some extent what they see as strengths and weaknesses. I always have some group discussion in addition to the formal evaluation documents we use' (B/BS).

'I talk to my students all the time. That way you know how you're getting on because once you've got their confidence they'll tell you. So you know you don't need a form procedure at all' (C/BS).

Staff were also encouraged to identify 'office hours' when students could talk to them informally. Some academics operated an open access system.

5.6.3 Feedback Precipitating Change

Interviewees were also asked what changes had been precipitated by student feedback. Business School interviewees stated that there was a lot of pressure to make amendments to MBA courses, in the light of feedback received. The pressure was not as intense at undergraduate level, but the basic caveat was that if a course received negative feedback then this should be acted upon as far as possible. Examples of changes made as a result of student feedback included changes to content, case studies used, core texts recommended, pace and presentation, and even removal of a lecturer from teaching a course.

Visiting lecturers from industry tended to take students through the text-book and this would be halted immediately by students, particularly MBA students. Academics had

been replaced shortly after the commencement of a course if students perceived them as being grossly unacceptable. Student comment to the effect that they had already covered some of the material in a module, prompted one academic to rethink the content of the course for the next year. Changes had also been made to the amount of course material in the light of student feedback. Comments on the balance between service and manufacturing in an operations management module prompted one Business School academic to adopt a greater service orientation, including changes in terms of the case study used and illustrations given. Topics had been removed from courses or taught in a different week of a course, in response to student comment. Topics had also been added to courses by student request. Exercises had been removed altogether when it was discovered that the students did not understand what was expected of them.

Improvements had been made in the organisation of assignment deadlines, and note had been taken of timetabling issues e.g. course clashes or too many 9am lectures. Physical i.e. teaching room issues had also been raised and changes made to lecture theatres, which were too small or too cold and draughty. Laboratory opening times and access hours to computer equipment had also been altered as a result of student feedback. One Computer Science department had removed all of the chairs in the terminal rooms and replaced them with more ergonometric operator's chairs, due to student pressure. In addition, responses had been made to positive feedback e.g. the incorporation of more visits into a programme because students stated that they enjoyed them.

5.7 External Input to Quality Assurance

In addition to Teaching Quality Assessment and Quality Audit procedures, there are two main external influences on university standards. These are accreditation and the external examiner system. The interviewees were, thus, asked their perceptions of the effectiveness of the external examiner system, and the influence of the professional bodies, in the maintenance of standards in higher education.

5.7.1 Accreditation

In addition to an institution's quality assurance procedures, a number of programmes were subject to accreditation. Where an academic subject led to a functional specialism, there was some influence from the professional body, which oversaw it. Accreditation ensured that the courses were in line with the professional requirements of the bodies involved and also possessed the maximum exemptions from their professional qualifications. Graduation from accredited programmes thus allowed membership of the professional body at a certain level, and in some instances led to a dual qualification e.g. an accredited course of post-qualifying training for social workers led to a Masters degree and an advanced award in Social Work Management.

Some professional institutions had higher professional status, and consequently more academic clout, than others e.g. Engineering, Computing and Accounting accreditation appeared to be of greater importance than that for Personnel Management or Marketing. In the latter case, one academic stated that 'they need us more than we need them' (B/BS). For Accounting, however, the influence of the professional bodies was regarded as being far more important than in any other area of the Business School, and probably the university. Disciplines such as Operations Management were not accredited by the professional bodies, at least not when taught in the Business School environment. It was thought, however, that Operations Management might have been subject to accreditation if taught as an engineering discipline. Accrediting bodies tended to concentrate more on competence-based skills rather than academic knowledge. Where academics saw themselves as being professionally competent in the delivery of predominantly academic, knowledge-based programmes, conflicts could develop if it was perceived that there was interference by the professional body.

Professional institutions identified in the study included the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), the Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM), the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM), the Central Council of Education and Training for Social Workers (CCETSW), the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAEW), the Institute

of Electrical Engineers (IEE) and the British Computer Society (BCS). In addition, some MBA programmes were accredited by the Association of MBAs (AMBA).

The accreditation process usually followed a procedure which was similar to other quality assurance mechanisms i.e. the submission of a document, which included prescribed information, both qualitative and quantitative, followed up by a visit. The duplication of effort involved in the preparation of documentation, containing essentially similar information but often in very different formats, for both Teaching Quality Assessment and for accreditation, in addition to the institutions own quality assurance procedures, led to frequent criticisms by academic staff. This had subsequently led to discussions regarding the rationalisation of quality assurance in higher education.

5.7.2 External Examiners

A number of the academics interviewed for the study were external examiners at other institutions. In the views of the interviewees, the influence of external examiners was very variable. Some stated that they received valuable feedback, but others felt that the guidance given was somewhat superficial and ad hoc.

> 'And we do get comments from them about good and bad features of what we do. Obviously they talk to our students as well so they get feedback from them. That's quite a useful channel in that sometimes students will say to them things that they perhaps don't say to us even though we do have formal chances for them to do it. So we get some feedback from them which is good' (C/CS).

> 'Sometimes they turn up, rarely do they have much knowledge of what the course looks like. Rarely have they met a student and rarely will they have anything substantial to say in terms of the logistics of the examination system' (A/BS).

Some external examiners were seen as trying to interfere too much, whereas others contributed little and gave the impression that being an external examiner was just something to put on their curriculum vitae (C/CS). In particular, academics felt that

external examiners were often unable to monitor the quality of large modular schemes, because of a lack of time or expertise and experience of such a scheme.

> 'I think the external examiners have very little influence. There are so many modules, so many pieces of work, so many deadlines and they aren't given very much time or money to do this. They do the best they can in the circumstances, but it's only trimming around the edges. Their influence is very very much less than it should be or could be or has been' (C/BS).

The interviewees acknowledged that external examiners were, in the main, 'hard pressed people', who received little remuneration for the task. One academic (A/BS) felt that the external examiner system had become weaker over the years and was now only used for assessment purposes. He commented that, in his view, the external examiner system for business subjects had never been anything like the professional examiner system that other parts of academic life were accustomed to.

5.8 Summary

Academics felt that it was possible to measure certain aspects of teaching performance, but that teaching 'quality' could not be evaluated to any degree of accuracy. Problems included the difficulties in specifying purposes in a 'fitness for purpose' approach, together with the distinction between quality and standards. Nevertheless, the academics believed that it was worthwhile trying to evaluate teaching performance, but felt that external assessment was not the best method. It was preferable to ensure the teaching competency of staff at the commencement of their appointments, and combine this with a student feedback system to identify potential problems and take remedial action as necessary.

There was no focus on teaching qualifications on appointment in any of the institutions and only minimal attempt to ensure teaching competency. Induction procedures made little, if any, attempt to include teaching methods and mentoring systems tended to be informal and 'patchy'. Appraisal also operated with varying degrees of effectiveness both within and between institutions. Academics were

encouraged to undertake training opportunities, but time pressures acted as a deterrent and there was little in terms of structured, progressive staff development opportunities for teaching. New staff were, however, increasingly encouraged to undertake training in teaching and learning on certificated in-house courses.

Only a minority of academics felt that teaching qualifications were essential. Issues raised included the 'trade-off' between subject discipline and teaching development, the absence of recognition of teaching excellence and the lack of appropriate courses. Most did acknowledge, however, that it would be beneficial for academics to provide some evidence of teaching competency.

All of the institutions had formal student feedback mechanisms in operation, including module/course questionnaires, and student representation on departmental committees. The respondents acknowledged the need for student feedback questionnaires, though many doubted the effectiveness of their system. Despite its limitations they did believe that the system was valuable in terms of identifying gross inadequacies. Student representatives also raised important issues on departmental committees. Both systems were, however, felt to be punishment-centred rather than performance enhancing.

Many of the programmes/courses were subject to accreditation, which ensured that they were in line with the requirements of the professional bodies. External examiners monitored all programmes/courses, but there were differences of opinion amongst the academics as to the effectiveness of the external examiner system, particularly for large modular schemes with high student numbers.

Chapter 6: Teaching Quality Assessment

This chapter seeks to establish the academics' perceptions of the teaching quality assessment (TQA) process. Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) was introduced following the *Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act* 1992. Under the terms of the 1992 Act, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE or 'the Council') had the responsibility for securing the assessment of the quality of the education that it funded. HEFCE was also responsible for managing quality assessment for the two universities in Northern Ireland. The assessment of the quality of education in Wales and Scotland was the responsibility of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) respectively. The primary focus, for the purposes of this study, was the assessment method adopted by HEFCE, since all four institutions involved were located in England.

This chapter describes the TQA methodology, which operated between February 1993 and June 1995, and examines the involvement of the interviewees in the TQA process and their perceptions of its effectiveness. Aspects explored include whether the academics felt that TQA encouraged them to look more critically at themselves with respect to teaching, and whether they believed that academic freedom and institutional autonomy had been infringed. The academics were also asked if they had been updated on the TQA methodology, and whether they believed that TQA encouraged 'compliance' and/or undermined professionalism and self-respect.

6.1 Teaching Quality Assessment Methodology

In accordance with the requirements of the FHE Act 1992 the HEFCE established, in September 1992, the Quality Assessment Committee to oversee the assessment process as well as review and re-develop the assessment method. In February 1993, the Council published the following purposes for quality assessment (HEFCE, 3/93):

- To ensure that all education for which the HEFCE provides funding is of satisfactory quality or better, and to ensure speedy rectification of unsatisfactory quality.

- To encourage improvements in the quality of education through the publication of assessment reports and an annual report.

- To inform funding and reward excellence

(HEFCE 3/93:A5)

Between February 1993 and June 1995 provision in 15 subjects ('units of assessment') was assessed in England and Northern Ireland. The fifteen subjects included Computer Science/Studies and Business and Management. Hence the assessment method used during this period was of particular significance for the purposes of this study.

The assessment method used was determined by HEFCE, in consultation with institutions and drawing on the experience of the pilot assessments carried out by the PCFC and UFC in Spring 1992, in engineering and in physical sciences. Following evaluation of the pilot assessments, it was decided that further refinement and testing was needed, hence six test assessments in business and management and in law were held in the Autumn of 1992. Subsequently, the quality assessment method based on a framework of self-assessment allied to external peer review, measured against the aims and objectives set by the subject provider, was clearly established. In October 1992 the HEFCE consulted institutions on the proposed assessment method. In the light of this consultation and discussions with the representative bodies, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), the Council published the assessment method and timetable for implementation in Circular 3/93 (February 1993).

The model used for the assessment method was one of 'fitness for purpose', the purposes being specified by the subject provider. Each subject provider would prepare a self-assessment, which could include a claim to be providing excellent quality of

education ('claim for excellence'). On the basis of analysis of the self-assessment, some providers received a three-day assessment visit carried out by a team of three to five peer assessors in the subject concerned. An assessment visit was made where one of the following criteria had been met:

- A prima facie case had been established that the institution was providing excellent quality education in the subject concerned.
- There were grounds for concern that quality might be at risk. Such grounds might also emerge in the audit reports written by the HEQC, or professional body reports where these were available. (HEFCE 3/93:B37)

In addition, a small sample of institutions were chosen specifically to provide examples of what was believed to be satisfactory quality education (HEFCE 3/93:B38).

HEFCE used a three-point assessment scale leading to an overall summative judgement of excellent, satisfactory or unsatisfactory quality of education. No judgement of excellent or unsatisfactory was made without an assessment visit. Judgements of satisfactory quality could be made with or without an assessment visit. The criteria for the three categories were:

Excellent	Education was of a generally very high quality.
Satisfactory	This category included many elements of good practice. Aims and objectives were being met and there was a good match between these, the teaching and learning process and the students' ability, experience, expectations and attainment.
Unsatisfactory	Education was not of an acceptable quality: there were serious shortcomings which needed to be addressed.

(HEFCE 3/93:B15)

HEFCE established the Quality Assessment Division (QAD) to manage the quality assessment operation. The assessors, who were involved in the quality assessment process, were academic and professional peers. Two distinct groups of assessors were employed i.e. contract assessors and subject specialist assessors. The former led and managed the assessment visits and were called the 'reporting assessor', whilst the latter made the specialist judgements on the quality of the provision. The reporting assessor reviewed the work of the subject specialist assessors at the end of each visit, in liaison with the QAD where necessary. Contract assessors also took part in the analysis of self-assessments and the training of subject specialist assessors. Contract assessors included personnel drawn from the ranks of the former Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) and secondments from higher education institutions. Subject specialist assessors were recruited following nomination by heads of institutions, professional bodies and subject associations. Individuals wishing to be subject specialist assessors could also apply directly to the HEFCE in response to public advertisements.

The assessment method examined the student learning experience and student achievement including consideration of the breadth of teaching, learning and assessment activities, students' achievements, the curriculum, staff and staff development, the application of learning resources (library equipment, IT, laboratory), student support and guidance and academic management at the subject level. An assessment visit would include scrutiny of students' work, direct observation of teaching and learning activities and discussions with staff and students. The resulting assessment reports identified a number of characteristics that peer assessors associated with excellent education across the sector and across subjects.

6.2 Results of Quality Assessments 1993-1995

The discussion of the results of quality assessment in this section includes an overview of the process during the period 1993-1995, together with specific reference to the subjects/units of assessment Computer Science/Studies and Business and Management.

Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), unlike its successor, Subject Review, did not involve universal visiting of institutions to assess the quality of education provided. The decision to carry out an assessment visit was made in the light of analysis of the self-assessments by assessors. During the period, 976 self-assessments were submitted, of which 588 made a claim for excellence. The claim was supported as justifying an assessment visit in 387 cases. In addition, 78 assessment visits were prompted by concerns that quality might be at risk and 92 were carried out on a sample basis. 419 assessments were made on the basis of analysis of the self-assessment alone, resulting in a satisfactory grading without an assessment visit.

Overall, assessors judged the quality of education in the 15 subjects/units of assessment to be excellent in 26 per cent, satisfactory in 73 per cent, and unsatisfactory in 1 per cent, of providers. Judgements of unsatisfactory quality lead to re-assessment within 12 months and all resulted in a satisfactory grading. Over 77 per cent of excellent judgements went to institutions in the former UFC sector, 22 per cent to former PCFC sector and 1 per cent to the FE sector. There was a notable shift upwards in the incidence of judgements of excellent quality between the first two rounds of assessment and the third round. This general trend was accompanied by a marked increase in the success of the former PCFC institutions in achieving an excellent rating.

Clear differences in the pattern of outcomes by former sector and by subject were noted in the HEFCE report with evidence of criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced assessment. Computer Science had the lowest proportion of 'excellent' assessments at 10% of providers. The highest proportion of 'excellents' was in Anthropology, which was also the smallest subject in terms of number of providers. Of the Business and Management providers, 18% were graded as 'excellent'. Quality of provision was deemed excellent in fewer than 20% of cases in the engineering, science and technology disciplines or where a substantial proportion of provision was in FE colleges. This raised questions as to the effectiveness of peer review, differences in institutional and subject culture, and whether the assessment method favoured particular institutional cultures or characteristics.

HEFCE concluded that higher education in England and Northern Ireland had been shown to be overwhelmingly satisfactory or better in the judgement of the academic and professional peers in the subjects concerned. Hence this provided the necessary reassurance to stakeholders in higher education including students, parents, employers and sponsors. It also called into question the cost effectiveness of TQA .

6.3 Interviewees Involvement in Teaching Quality Assessment

As previously noted, on the basis of analysis of the self-assessment document, some subject providers were visited as part of TQA. This selective visiting process meant that not all of the departments in the study were visited by the assessors. It was necessary, therefore, to establish whether the interviewees had had any involvement in TQA before their views on it could be explored.

Only three of the departments in the study were visited as part of the quality assessment procedure, all of whom had included a 'claim for excellence' that had been supported by assessor analysis of the self-assessment. Those who were visited included one pre-1992 Business School, one pre-1992 Computer Science department, both of which were assessed as 'Excellent', and one post-1992 Business School, which was subsequently assessed as 'Satisfactory'. The second pre-1992 Business School was later assessed under Subject Review in January 2001 and had not, therefore, been subject to an assessment visit when the interviews were conducted.

There seemed to be confusion on the part of some academics as to whether the Business School in institution 'A' was visited under the TQA procedure. Senior staff in the School had been involved in the discussions as to whether to submit a claim for excellence and they were able to confirm that the Vice Chancellor had decided not to make a claim for excellence. Opinion was divided as to whether this had been appropriate decision.

> 'No, the VC decided. I just stuck up my hand and agreed, that's all, because the nature of the political system was not such that it was wise to spend a lot of time disagreeing with him. I think it was a bad decision at the time'. 'Of course he knew more about the

rest of the university than I did so maybe he was right. As far as my own experiences are concerned, I didn't think we had anything to fear' (A/BS).

Two members of the more junior staff thought that they had been visited. One believed that 'they (the assessors) came and sat in and watched me teach' (A/BS). The other stated:

'I think we did have a visit actually. I seem to remember them being here. My understanding is that we put ourselves in as being 'satisfactory' and not 'excellent'. I do seem to remember there being a week because I was half expecting to get called in because I was a new lecturer. And we were sort of getting notes saying new lecturers were quite likely to get called in and I was one of the few new lecturers in the Business School. But I didn't. So there was some kind of visit I think' (A/BS).

Senior staff in the Computer Science department of institution 'A' felt that they did not have a legitimate claim for excellence. Part of this was the high student:staff ratios they were working with. Members of the department had been involved in the discussions but, again, it was the Vice Chancellor who made the final decision to submit a 'satisfactory' claim in the self-assessment.

'We claimed satisfactory'. 'No, on the grounds that we knew we wouldn't get away with excellent. And there was just a danger that we might be regarded as unsatisfactory, slight danger. Well, when you have a high student:staff ratio you may be able to operate your teaching very efficiently and effectively, but people who come in from outside will look at the 30:1 ratio and say, "oh how can you do this, how can you do that". So there's a danger that people will regard everything that you do as not very good quality' (A/CS).

Both the Business School and the Computer Science Department in institution 'B' were visited under TQA. Senior staff were involved in the preparation of the self-assessment. More junior staff were often unaware of what the self-assessment was. Academics were responsible for the preparation of comprehensive documentation in standard formats for the individual modules for which they were responsible. The Business School prepared staff by arranging Teaching Excellence Days, bringing in

external teaching 'experts' to run the seminars. Pre-preparation in the School also included viewing recognised good teachers.

> 'I wasn't Convenor then so my role was simply one of the frightened people who knew that they were going to be collared. We all had to attend various sessions of how to improve your teaching or how to impress the assessors and what they were looking for. There was a small working party to set things up, doing the usual things, perhaps trying to hide people who were not so ..... to go to a conference that week and also to try and make sure that the stars were on. But otherwise I was one of the many who knew that it was coming. We certainly were in no doubt about that' (Group Head: B/BS).

A number of the academics interviewed were assessed on their teaching. Some orchestration was required to ensure that assessors saw, as far as possible, only the better teachers. Assessors also talked to those members of staff who had a significant administrative role e.g. as Chair of undergraduate committees including SSLC. In the Business School the event was co-ordinated by a small working party who 'worked like dogs for months to get the paperwork ready'. There was similar frenetic activity in the Computer Science Department. Both received significant support and advice from the central Registry, who co-ordinated the entire events.

The Business School in institution 'C' was visited by a team of about 5 assessors over a period of a week. Co-ordination of the event was delegated to Subject Assessment Officers, one for each subject group. The Divisional Managers ensured that the quality procedures and manuals were in place as well as subject-specific documentation. They also had to make themselves available for interview. Their role was largely an administrative co-ordinating role and their teaching was not necessarily assessed.

The Computer Science Department in institution 'C' claimed 'satisfactory', and was not visited. Senior staff took the decision not to claim 'excellent' and were responsible for the self-assessment.

'We had had a full HMI inspection in the June before we had to write this. We looked at what was required. The HMI were very pleased with us, but said there was no way (we'd) get 'quality' unless (we) got a decent building. So we looked at the whole situation and said what are we going to benefit out of this, what should we do and we decided that our objective was to get a 'satisfactory' rating and not bother with a full visit. Now that might sound negative, but we thought it was realistic because we didn't think we'd get a quality rating' (C/CS).

A number of the academics interviewed in 'C' had little knowledge of, or interest in, the TQA procedure.

> 'When I hear the words quality assessment my brain switches off. I'm not absolutely sure what it is. It's a terrible thing to say. I get sort of vague ideas about it and then I start drifting off to sleep, so I leave it. It has not really impinged on me very much' (C/CS).

Senior members of staff in the Computer Science Department of institution 'D' prepared the self-assessment and did not claim excellence.

> 'In those days quality assessment was on a selective basis. Each institution was asked to prepare a self-assessment and I was one of the three authors of our self assessment of Computing'. 'We always take pride in knowing our own limitations and so, unlike most of the other institutions, we did not submit, along with our self-assessment, a claim for excellence, which meant that we weren't visited' (Group Head:D/CS).

Junior members of staff were often totally unaware of what Teaching Quality Assessment was. The Head of Subject was also a reporting assessor so he had in-depth knowledge of the procedure. Despite his experience as an assessor, the institution had not, for reasons unknown, consulted him about the TQA process generally.

> ' I have been exceedingly disappointed that this institution has failed to respond in any way to all my offers to bring to the institution the experience that I have gained as a reporting assessor. I've led twenty-eight quality assessment visits since 1993 in a variety of subjects' (Group Head:D/CS).

He was the only member of academic staff in the interview sample who had been an assessor.

These responses illustrate the approach adopted by each of the institutions to TQA. Institution 'A' appeared reluctant to engage with the TQA process, which was interesting given that it had introduced Total Quality Management. With respect to its Computer Science department, it was probably realistic to assume that an 'Excellent' grade would not be achieved, partly because of the high student:staff ratios. In view of the fact that the Business School later achieved 24 out of 24 when assessed under Subject Review, it is more difficult to understand why this School was not allowed to submit a prima facie case for excellence. It is possible that the institution saw few material benefits in putting its staff through the work and anxiety of an assessment visit. Given that quality assessment was in the early stages of development, it is possible that 'A' did not take the exercise particularly seriously (see Henkel 2000:78). There was a perceived lack of both the staff and systems in 'A' to provide strong central support to departments for TQA, which contrasted with Institution 'B' where there were central personnel devoted to co-ordinating the process. The approach of Institution 'B' was that it was keen to do well, or 'out to win' as one respondent described it, and all departments would be expected to submit a prima facie case for excellence. Of the four departments assessed in 'B' under TQA, all claimed excellence and were visited, two of the four being graded 'Excellent'.

Institution 'C' allowed the departments themselves to decide whether they should claim excellence. As 'C' had introduced IS0 9001 and Investors in People (IIP) it was fairly confident that it had the quality management infrastructure in place. Of the two departments in the study the Business School was visited under TQA i.e. its prima facie case for excellence had been accepted, whilst Computing, realistically, did not claim excellence, predominantly as a result of resource issues. The Business School in 'C' was later assessed under Subject Review and achieved 23 out of 24 points. Institution 'D' appeared to have little interest in TQA, perhaps because it believed that its chances of achieving 'excellent' grades were very slim. The Computing department in this institution felt that it was being realistic in not making a prima facie case for

excellence. It is interesting that this institution did not make any attempt to benefit from the experiences of the reporting assessor in Computing. The Business School in this institution refused to be involved in this study, indicating some insecurities with respect to 'quality'.

6.4 Benefits and Criticisms of Teaching Quality Assessment

The academics interviewed felt that there should be quality controls for teaching in operation, hence any criticisms were with the procedure itself and not the policy of quality monitoring. This was a common theme in the THES 'Quality Debate' which was published in October 1993. A similar view was formed by the CHES evaluation of TQA, the authors observing that:

i There is a strong view in institutions that, in principle, quality assessment in higher education is a justifiable undertaking and that it is already producing benefits to institutions;

ii There is a widespread belief – both within the Funding Council and across the sector – that the current system in England could be improved (Barnett et al, 1994:5)

Benefits identified by respondents included that it was morale boosting to have a good rating or encouraging comments. Good ratings would also help in attracting students. Academics believed that assessment of teaching quality could improve the status of teaching in higher education. They also felt that external pressure on institutions was more effective than internal pressure e.g. with respect to resources. In this regard, despite the work and anxieties, many academics welcomed an external quality monitoring system.

One academic commented that 95% of the benefit came in the process, rather than the outcome of TQA. The monitoring process had facilitated significant improvements in the organisation and delivery of courses, resulting in more comprehensive syllabuses, course objectives and reading lists. In addition to more consistency in course

administration, interviewees felt that TQA had encouraged reflective thinking on university teaching and, in some cases, assisted them in identifying poor teaching.

> 'I think the biggest benefit really has been to wake up the university to the monitoring process that is going on. And I think it's to the benefit of the university and to the school in the long run that we believe, or we have believed in the past, that we have done a good job. But there hasn't been anybody there to tell us that we're doing a good job or a bad job. And, at times, the lecturers have been right. We have been right when we've said that, you know, this is an erosion of the quality of the product that we're producing. Mass numbers or poor resources or whatever has been an erosion. Somebody else is now telling the people at the top that it's happening, and they will listen from outside rather than listening from underneath. And also it means that we all have to look at what we're doing and make sure that we're producing something of a quality, you know something that we can actually demonstrate. It forces us to think a lot harder about what we've done and what we're doing and I think that's just got to be good' (Group Head: C/BS).

The procedure itself came in for criticism, in that institutions were pre-warned, hence the teaching was felt to be not truly representative or realistic.

> 'The thing is with that assessment it's very easy because you were warned in advance. It is almost the lecturers were picked who were going to be actually assessed and what day and what lecture. And so it was a lot of pre-warning really. So even if you weren't a very good teacher, you tended to put everything in it for that day, which was probably not the best way to do it' (A/BS).

In addition, academics felt that institutions were developing strategies to appear to meet the requirements rather than actually benefiting the learning experience long term. TQA was, thus, regarded as being a 'bureaucratic paper chase' with institutions adopting a game playing approach. Similarly, issues of 'gamesmanship' in relation to TQA have also been raised by critics of the process (Baty, 2002).

Interviewees also expressed some concern at the number of 'excellent' grades awarded, in that this devalued the grading scale. Although external pressure on

institutions was regarded as being potentially useful, it was felt that true quality came from an internally in-built philosophy rather than being externally imposed, a view which was echoed by authors such as Trow (1994).

Academics criticised the time and energy expenditure demanded by the TQA process and the accompanying anxiety and stress it created, particularly during the visit.

> 'Yes, we wound ourselves up so much there were two nervous breakdowns'. 'The Head of School went from a stress-related back problem. And it was suggested towards the end of the process that it was not worth going for the last ten per cent, is just not worth the nervous breakdowns the people are going to get as a result. It was a very stressful time' (Group Head:C/BS).

The respondents also felt that there were problems with respect to professional autonomy and the move towards managerialism and perception of control generated by TQA.

> 'I think there are problems in terms of professional autonomy and the general movement towards managerialism. Having said that I mean one doesn't know any other way of shifting the tanker, as it were, re-directing the tanker because of the fragmentation of academic life unless you bring in a degree of managerialism' (A/BS).

> 'I'm not sure exactly an external exercise is better at doing it. There is also, I think, the question of the energy, time expenditure and perception of control involved in that process, maybe counter productive in terms of what people actually deliver' (A/BS).

There was some concern that the TQA process could standardise the creativity out of the teaching situation. Despite the fact that TQA was based on the institutions' own missions, some academics felt that they were being benchmarked against the classic university model and that it was not realistic to apply this to 'batch production' systems of mass higher education (C/BS). This particularly disadvantaged the post-1992 institutions, who were cynical about the higher grades achieved by the pre-1992 universities.

'I must admit that we are quite interested in the fact that it is always the places that do a lot of research that seem to have high quality teaching when they come to assessing them. Because anecdotally, and from people we've heard about, you know just from students and relatives of students who have gone elsewhere, there's a lot of evidence to the contrary' (C/CS).

Assessors also came in for criticism since it was felt that they were often not qualified to assess the type or organisation of teaching they encountered on TQA visits e.g. innovative teaching methods or modular schemes. Interviewees also stated that students complained that they found assessors were disruptive when they sat in on classes and were known to 'collar them on stairwells' for unsolicited views (B/BS).

'And they did have a habit of stopping students. Some students did complain that people didn't say who they were and they asked what they thought about a certain course. And they felt that this was actually bad practice. So they didn't handle themselves brilliantly in that sense' (Group Head:B/BS).

The THES reported similar 'horror stories' regarding the quality, abilities and behaviour of the assessors (Sanders 1994b, Thomson 1996). Students were reported not only to feeling that they were being assessed, but also that they were in some ways responsible if their departments did less well than expected (Sanders, 1994).

Interviewees also stated that there was a lot of ambiguity in the feedback given to individual academics, an issue that was also raised in the THES with reference to the pilot assessments (Santinelli 1993).

'I had no problem. She didn't intervene in any way and the students weren't too constrained. She didn't give me any feedback, which I think would have been useful. I think that was patchy. Maybe it was up to the individual to ask for it and maybe she left before the end of the session. So I hope that wasn't a missed opportunity, and the feedback was for the School as a whole rather than at an individual level' (B/BS).

Concern was expressed, by academics, as to what purpose TQA was serving, and whether it represented real value for money. Since the Quality Assurance Agency had concluded that the exercise had proved beyond reasonable doubt that the state of higher education in the UK was generally very good, experts had also expressed the view that the exercise was a waste of time and money (Baty, 2002).

6.5 Did TQA Increase Self-Critical Evaluation of Teaching?

The THES reported that the greatest benefit of the Teaching Quality Assessment process was seen to be that it encouraged departments to look at themselves more critically (Thomson, 1996).

Interviewees were asked whether the introduction of TQA had led to an increase in self-critical evaluation of their own teaching. The majority of academics felt that it had not resulted in them being more self-evaluative.

> 'For me, no to be honest. I fool myself that I'm actually quite a good teacher and certainly the person who assessed me thought that that was also the case. If they had actually pinpointed some weaknesses, I think I would have taken them seriously and it wouldn't have been for the next visit. But in my case I didn't. It was just a pat on the back' (Group Head:B/BS).

The academics stated that they were self-critical anyway, though opportunity for reflection was limited due to the time pressures of university teaching. One Head of Division felt that the effect on teaching was, at best, marginal. A number of academics believed that the introduction of TQA had had more of an effect on systems than on teaching per se.

> 'I think it's right that the universities think about it. I think it actually made people tighten up systems. But I don't think it necessarily improved the actual teaching, but it's improved the systems. But it hasn't made me change' (B/BS).

In other words, TQA had resulted in academics being encouraged to think more about learning outcomes, forms of assessment and the structure of the curriculum. One interviewee felt that the institution had actually viewed it more as an audit, than an assessment of teaching quality.

It was felt that TQA had resulted in raising the profile of teaching in the schools/departments and might have accelerated, rather than initiated, certain developments.

'Yes, in our Subject Committee and in our module teams we are much more critical of effective ways of teaching and dealing with large numbers of students'. 'So yes as a Subject area we definitely have. Now whether that was anything to do with that process three years ago, or whether it would have happened anyway because we're dealing with the thirty per cent of the population who come into higher education rather than the twelve per cent which was the case a few years ago. And when, therefore, we have different problems I think we would have faced that anyway, irrespective of the assessment' (Group Head:C/BS).

For the most part, institutions felt that they had become more self-critical over recent years because of an increased customer service approach, which had led to greater emphasis on student feedback. Students had become more vociferous, critical and questioning, and it was student feedback which academics feared more than TQA.

> 'Difficult to know, maybe at the margin. I'd say what's led much more has always been dealing with student feedback. I mean if I were asked to distinguish between the two, I'd actually say the big effect for me, but I think also for my colleagues, is the extent to which student feedback is available. It's something you see, it's something certainly your designated senior member sees and discusses with you. That has a big effect on you' (Group Head:B/BS).

Student feedback was, thus, regarded as more influential on teaching quality than the Teaching Quality Assessment process.

6.6 Is the School or University preparing for your next TQA?

The Carnegie Survey (1994) reported that only 30% of UK academics felt that they were kept informed about what was going on by their institution (Boyer et al 1994). Whether this was because the institution was selective in what information it distributed, and/or to whom, was unclear.

Interviewees were asked whether there were on-going preparations for the next quality assessment of their subject, which was expected between 2000 and 2002. Academics stated that certain developments were taking place but they were not aware whether this was as a result of, or in preparation for the next, TQA. There were no on-going programmes specifically related to the assessment of teaching quality, though TQA was a standing agenda item for the annual Away Day in pre-1992 Business School 'A'.

Priorities tended to change significantly in higher education institutions, or as one interviewee stated:

> 'As far as I can see at the present time, quality has died a death, because I hear nothing. Eighteen months ago I heard about nothing but quality; now I don't hear about it at all' (D/CS).

Teaching quality was also regarded as secondary to research, and preparing for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), due in 2001, was currently taking priority over TQA.

> 'I suppose I have a sense that it's to do with massaging the reality rather than altering it. And so, therefore, the university leadership, leadership isn't really the right word, but I mean the people who run the university, jump from one priority to another. And I think that the RAE came out relatively recently' (C/CS).

At the time of the interviews, the Teaching Quality Assessment process was changing, as a result of feedback from institutions, and had been re-named Subject

Review. Information on Subject Review was made available, though primarily to senior staff e.g. Group Heads. A number of interviewees complained about information overload. When information on Subject Review was sent to academics, therefore, it was likely to be filed or thrown away unless a review visit was imminent.

> 'They will keep me aware on a regular basis, but they will fall victim of the fact that when I switch email on there will be how many unread email messages. I delete half of the email messages without reading them. It's just information overload, that's the serious problem' (Group Head:B/BS).

> 'They probably do, but I can't honestly say that I read every word, everything that comes out of the centre. If something is flagged up as being important then it is; they do make sure that everybody knows. And there is access to information, but sometimes you don't access it unless you need it. I suspect it's the same in most places. I don't think they try to hide anything particularly' (C/BS).

Academics felt that they were under too many time pressures to actively pursue information on Subject Review, though some noted that they managed to pick up some information from the THES.

6.7 Is the Introduction of TQA an Infringement of Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy?

The academics interviewed acknowledged that there was a need for accountability and the maintenance of academic standards. One stated that academic freedom did not include the freedom to be ineffective in their responsibilities to students. Appraisal of teaching was, therefore, regarded as being justified and probably essential. Concern was expressed, however, with respect to a) the methodology used and b) whether the assessments would be linked to funding and, thus, used to control resources. If so, there was the potential for TQA to be perceived as a controlling device and, thus, threaten institutional autonomy.

'I think it is, yes, a bit in terms of how it is actually working. But I think it's actually quite complicated in a sophisticated sort of way. I don't think it's the intention and I don't think it necessarily follows that all forms of quality assessment would do that. But I think in practice because of two things. One is the bureaucratic procedures involved and people conforming to external models about what counts as quality, which are very dubious and difficult to define. There is a constraining element and I think there is a sense in which people go along with procedures with which they are not particularly happy or believe in, for a quiet life. But then I think that feeds back into your consciousness of what you're doing.

If we take the two terms – how do you define 'quality' and 'assessment', you are being assessed so there is an element of there being a controlling device. So it's partly the procedures, and the language which act as a constraint, by and large a negative constraint. The other thing is that this is in the context of increased pressure, increased amount of work and also a perception, I think an accurate perception, that this assessment exercise will then be used to control resources. So it's not sort of value-free. It will be used probably as a way of now – given that I think it has a sort of cohersive, surveillance mode to it in operation' (A/BS).

Four interviewees felt that TQA could be a threat to institutional autonomy, but that this was not necessarily a bad thing. One stated that he welcomed an even tighter system of peer review of teaching quality.

'Institutional autonomy, I think, is being threatened by TQA and it's about time. As you know, I believe that the CNAA was an enormously powerful instrument for the good and I think universities currently have too much institutional autonomy in some of these areas. And I would welcome a much tighter system of peer review of teaching quality' (A/BS).

Two other academics felt that teaching quality assessment should be absorbed into the culture of institutions and be regarded as one input into the on-going process of responsible self-management. In addition, two interviewees stated that TQA reinforced, rather than contradicted their responsibilities to students, and helped

academic institutions avoid or withstand pressures to reduce standards in an increasingly product-oriented, mass higher education system.

> 'No, my view is that it's a way of enhancing what we do. We're now getting more and more market driven, what do the students want, what does the marketplace want. And that's fine to a degree, but at the end of the day a lot of students, all they want is the piece of paper with the qualification on it. They don't really care about the quality. They do not really care about enhancing their skills or improvements as such. What they want is that qualification, that piece of paper. If we were allowed to just get away with it there may well be some institutions that would try to say right, well here's your piece of paper, pay your money, off you go. I think this enables us as lecturers to resist that sort of stress' (Group Head:C/BS).

Some students were, thus, perceived as regarding higher education as a credentialling rather than an educational process (see Henkel 2000:214).

Interviewees did not feel that the introduction of teaching quality assessment eroded their academic freedom. The right to say what they thought and believe in was not infringed in any direct way. If there were an agreed standard in terms of best practice for all teaching and evaluation which academics were forced to follow, then this would erode academic freedom and enjoyment of teaching. The process was not prescriptive, however, and did not impact on the intellectual content of what was taught.

> 'The way in which it is presented and it's coherence and consistency may have been criticised, but I've never come across a case where the views of an academic about his or her subject were contested in any way through the quality assessment process. That's where academic freedom lies - the right to say what you think. And I've never heard the slightest suggestion that that has been curtailed in Teaching Quality Assessment' (A/BS).

What TQA did impose on academics, however, was extra work before and during the assessment.

'What it is of course is an imposition on the staff throughout the institution in terms of giving them work. But it is again my view that we're only asking them to do things, which they ought to be doing anyway, which is to consider how well they're doing. I always have a simple set of questions that I ask heads of department when I visit them, how well are you doing against your own objectives, and how do you know? That's it really' (Reporting Assessor and Group Head:D/CS).

Academics acknowledged that it was accepted that their research was reviewed and assessed, and they could see no valid reason why their teaching should not also be monitored. As one academic put it 'it is just a matter of tradition'. It was regarded as normal for academics to feel some resentment to external criticism.

'There tends to be some resentment towards when you're told that somebody doesn't like what you're doing. I very much appreciate the need for it and in some respects I'd like to see a stronger HEFCE policy to ensure that standards are maintained. So from one point of view I can see it as an infringement. I very much see the need for it and the importance of it' (C/CS).

The methodology used and the credibility of the assessors were, thus, key to the operation of an effective and acceptable system. As one commented, 'the jury was still out' as to whether the current system was in fact appraising teaching effectively and proving of benefit to students (A/CS).

6.8 Has the Introduction of TQA Encouraged a 'Culture of Compliance'?

Following the introduction of TQA, the THES reported widespread discontent over the new quality assessment arrangements, whilst at the same time acknowledging that quality audit had stimulated major improvements in quality monitoring in universities.

'Procedures required by the English Funding Council, while they purport to judge quality against mission are being widely criticised as more likely to produce a culture of compliance than to encourage academic institutions to take responsibility for themselves for what they do and how they do it' (THES 1993).

Opinion was divided amongst interviewees as to whether the introduction of teaching quality assessment encouraged a 'compliance culture'. Approximately half of those interviewed felt that TQA did encourage a 'compliance culture' in some respects or to a certain extent. This was particularly noted in the early stages of TQA, as institutions tried to guess what the criteria for excellence were. Hence there was some compliance with guidelines and how to write aims and objectives, but not in terms of the content of the curriculum or the practice of its delivery.

Interviewees felt that there was some evidence that institutions were making changes to meet what the assessors were looking for and that this encouraged form over content. It was natural for institutions to want to get good ratings, since it boosted morale, helped attract students and provide a better experience for the staff. Hence there could be compliance in terms of ensuring that the paperwork and systems were acceptable to the assessors.

> 'Yes, if by that one means being seen to have the paperwork right as opposed to – being a culture of appearing to be right as opposed to having done it right, yes I think so. But it doesn't necessarily have to be that way. If it's like that, that's a criticism of the prevailing system not the principle of it' (A/CS).

Potential compliance was particularly noted during the period of the assessment visit, after which academics 'breathed a sigh of relief and carried on as normal' (B/CS). One academic believed that it was necessary to be compliant to a certain extent in teaching in any case. Another felt that compliance was not a problem providing that the criteria were carefully chosen, whilst yet another felt that TQA should be seen as a support. Two specifically used the expression 'keep your head down' (A/BS, B/BS) to describe the culture that they felt was engendered by the introduction of TQA.

Three interviewees stated that academics were not naturally compliant.

> 'In my experience trying to get academics to comply to anything, achieving it is a miracle. I think we tend to non-comply' (Group Head:A/BS).

'With academics, no, you're joking. It's like does a chair encourage a compliance culture with a lion tamer with the lions, no' (Group Head:B/BS).

Hence any compliance noted was of limited effect and would only be in the process, rather than the content of teaching. As two interviewees stated, TQA was not trying to impose anything like a national curriculum. Another added that academics did not have any service level agreements, so compliance did not come into it. What academics were doing in responding to TQA imperatives was removing the levels of criticism, which might make life uncomfortable and get in the way of their promotion or their status. This respondent felt that TQA did not produce convergent behaviour towards certain teaching methods, approaches or content.

'If the term is taken in another way in terms of convergence. Is it producing convergent behaviour towards certain teaching methods, certain approaches, certain types of content? Then I don't think in 'X', Teaching Quality Assessment really has had so much systematic effect that it has produced convergent behaviour as in course presentational methods or styles of teaching or types of content which is easy to put in or types of content which is not easy to put in' (A/BS).

One Group Head in a post-1992 university, felt that the whole notion that an academic should be put in an ivory tower was, to his mind, the height of arrogance. This was to do with past culture, hence it was likely that the introduction of TQA would 'bother' the pre-1992 universities more than the post-1992 universities, who were more used to being externally monitored (D/CS).

6.9 Has the Introduction of TQA Undermined Professionalism and Self-Respect?

There was a range of responses as to whether the introduction of TQA undermined professionalism and self-respect, from 'yes on balance it probably does' (A/BS) to 'no, good quality assurance will enhance it' (A/BS). One academic stated that all monitoring and control undermined professionalism to a certain extent, but that professionals acknowledged that there would always be some form of assessment or appraisal system. On the other hand, it was felt that there was no reason why a certain

level of regulation should limit creativity and freedom, which was seen as helping to drive professionalism.

> 'No I don't think it should do. I don't see it as people checking on me and what I'm doing. I think it's an opportunity to show what you can do, what you are doing. And I talk to students about the fact that they will be subject to appraisal systems in where they're working and have objectives set and targets. I don't really see why we should be that much different. I'm quite a realist, and I've worked in business as well so I don't think we can be too far removed. And I think you've got to have some sort of standards. And I don't feel threatened by the process at all. And I don't find it's an interfering process particularly. And I'm quite glad that there are some standards there' (C/BS).

For the most part, those interviewees who stated that there was the potential for TQA to undermine professionalism, added that it depended to a large degree on how it was done. If TQA was seen as achieving legitimate objectives and encouraged academics to take responsibility on an individual level, then TQA could increase professionalism. It was felt that TQA did lead to increased anxiety and uncertainty, but this was primarily the result of a lack of confidence.

> 'It shouldn't do is my answer. I think it makes certain people very nervous and uncertain, but that's because they're nervous and uncertain about what they're doing'. 'We're doing a great job. We ought to have more confidence in what we're doing. And people coming in just need explaining to, and once they're told they will find out, and if they don't find out that's their problem. So yes, it does undermine but it shouldn't do to the extent it does. And in some cases perhaps it should do so' (Group Head:C/BS).

The TQA process, therefore, had to be sensitive to the fact that it was dealing with people who were trying their best, and who should be treated with respect. One academic did state that TQA policies appeared to give so much control to students that it was almost an insult to the professionalism of the lecturer. So there was a 'fine line' (A/BS).

Some interviewees felt that the effect on professionalism related to the quality of the feedback received, rather than the policy of TQA generally. Feedback could be very useful if handled sensitively, but damaging if it was dysfunctional.

> 'There is no reason why it should unless someone comes and tells you you're a really bad teacher in which case it can yes, it can make you feel awful. So that can be quite concerning. Maybe only those people who are awful get told they're awful and maybe that's not such a bad thing. I don't know, but I suspect that it could, but I don't think it has to be that way' (B/CS).

Ways should, therefore, be found of improving the way feedback was handled, rather than eliminating feedback altogether. Criticisms of someone's performance could be demoralising if handled inappropriately, or if it came from someone with little credibility. Conversely, peer review that was supportive and constructive, was seen as being beneficial. By definition, peer review was regarded as not being able to undermine professionalism (D/CS). Research output was peer reviewed and this was seen as improving the quality of research, and promoting professionalism.

Six interviewees felt that TQA might enhance certain aspects of professionalism and could be regarded as an 'enormous ally' (A/BS).

> 'I think it's beginning to give a little bit of self respect back to university teaching. To see people taking teaching seriously, teaching quality seriously. To see the arguments as to what constitutes quality and what doesn't constitute quality, give real weighting to continually getting nervous about whether we meet the kind of expectations currently set up by our different stakeholders. And ask what we can do to make teaching quality more satisfactory to our different stakeholders. I think this is an enormous breath of fresh air to teachers in this university. They can hardly believe their luck really. Whether they take it seriously, they can't think for a moment that the ethos has changed to that degree, but they're hoping beyond hope that maybe it's real' (A/BS).

With the introduction of TQA, it was now easier to claim that the profession was in some sense rationally or scientifically based, rather than being 'just a collection of

prejudices amalgamated by a powerful group of people who protect each other's interests' (A/BS). TQA was, thus, the framework that would help academia demonstrate that it was effective in maintaining standards. This, it was felt, could only serve to improve the status of university teaching, and increase professionalism.

One interviewee, however, described TQA as one example of the attempt to industrialise what academics did.

> 'Maybe it's part of what someone else called it, is the commodification of higher education and the massification of higher education. It's something wider and probably more pervasive. And it's also manifest I think in the elevation of the polytechnics. I don't actually think it amounts to the elevation of the polytechnics, it just amounted to the degradation of the word university' (C/CS).

He felt that the damage had already been done, and that TQA was only a 'drop in the ocean by comparison'.

6.10 Summary

Three of the seven departments had been visited under the TQA procedure, including two departments in one pre-1992 university and one post-1992 Business School. Many of those not involved in the preparation of the self-assessment or a visit had little knowledge of the process.

Academics felt that TQA could improve the status of teaching and, in many respects, they welcomed an external quality monitoring system, though they believed that true quality came from an internal in-built philosophy. TQA was believed to have benefited the departments in terms of facilitating the improvement of the consistency of course administration and encouraging reflective teaching. Despite this, respondents felt that the direct effect on teaching and learning was, at best, marginal.

The TQA methodology was strongly criticised particularly the bureaucratic procedures involved, and the encouragement of 'gamesmanship' i.e. institutions

developing strategies to meet the requirements rather than benefiting the learning experience long term. A TQA visit was also very stressful and time consuming. Issues with respect to increasing managerialism and the perception of control engendered by TQA were also raised. Doubts were expressed as to the validity of the grades awarded, and the competence of the assessors.

The academics fully acknowledged the need for accountability and the maintenance of standards. TQA was perceived as potentially threatening institutional autonomy, but in some cases, interviewees felt that institutions had too much autonomy, so this was not necessarily an undesirable effect. Alternatively, TQA could be seen, as helping academic institutions to withstand pressures to lower standards in order to meet market demands. Respondents did not feel that the introduction of TQA eroded their academic freedom at all. TQA was regarded as encouraging 'compliance' to a limited extent, but this did not affect in any way the content of the curriculum.

Interviewees also believed that, potentially, TQA could undermine professionalism, though they emphasised that the effect on professionalism related predominantly to the quality of feedback received, rather than the policy of TQA as such. It was felt that TQA could, in fact, enhance certain aspects of professionalism and give some self-respect back to university teaching.

There was little in terms of preparations for the next quality assessment in the institutions studied, and preparing for the next RAE (2001) was taking precedence over TQA. Interviewees commented on time pressures and information overload, which meant that not only would they not actively pursue information on quality assessment, but it was unlikely that they would read information sent to them unless an assessment was imminent.

Chapter 7: Developments in Quality Assessment

The assessment method described in Chapter 6 operated during the period February 1993 to June 1995. During this period, HEFCE and HEFCW jointly commissioned an independent review of the method. The Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES), Institute of Education, University of London was appointed to undertake the review. The CHES review report, *Assessment of the Quality of Higher Education: A Review and an Evaluation* was published by HEFCE in April 1994. Drawing on the CHES report and HEFCE's own monitoring and evaluation, HEFCE issued the Consultation Paper 2/94 *Further Development of the Method for the Assessment of Education*, in June 1994.

At the same time, discussions were in progress with respect to the development of a single system for quality assurance, which incorporated both assessment and audit. This led initially to the formation of the Joint Planning Group (JPG) and finally to the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) chaired by Sir Ron Dearing, made a number of specific recommendations about quality and standards, which played a major part in setting the agenda of the work of the QAA. The Dearing report also recommended the establishment of the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT), as a professional body for academia.

This chapter outlines the development of the assessment method and the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) following proposals arising from the Joint Planning Group (JPG). Dearing's recommendations with respect to quality assurance and the establishment of the Institute for Learning and Teaching are outlined. Further development of the quality assurance method by the QAA leading to the proposed Institutional Review methodology is examined in some detail.

7.1 Development of the Quality Assessment Method (April 1995 to September 1996)

Following consultation with institutions and others, HEFCE issued Circular 39/94 in December 1994 setting out the revised assessment method, which would operate in the assessment round April 1995 to September 1996. The main developments in the assessment method were:

- Universal rather than selective visiting.
- Establishment of a core set of six aspects of higher education provision to provide a common structure for the main features of assessment.
- Grading of the six aspects on a four-point numerical assessment scale (giving an aggregate score out of 24), in order to achieve a graded profile of the quality of provision.
- An overall judgement at the threshold level derived from the graded profile.
- The publication of only one report following an assessment visit.
- Publication of the subject provider's 500 word statement of aims and objectives in the report. (HEFCE 39/94:item 8)

The six core aspects of provision were curriculum design, content and organisation; teaching, learning and assessment; student progression and achievement; student support and guidance; learning resources and quality assurance and enhancement (HEFCE 39/94/29).

The four scale points identified were:

1. The aims and/or objectives set by the subject provider are not met; there are major shortcomings that must be rectified.
2. The aspect makes an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives, but significant improvement could be made. The aims set by the subject provider are broadly met.

3. The aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement. The aims set by the subject provider are met.
4. The aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met. (HEFCE 39/94:54)

HEFCE emphasised that these changes did not affect the fundamentals of the assessment method, which in terms of nature and process were broadly unchanged:

- Assessment against the subject provider's aims and objectives.
- Assessment of the student learning experience and student achievement.
- Assessment by peer review.
- Combination of a self-assessment prepared by the subject provider and an assessment visit by external peer assessors. (HEFCE 39/94:7)

Overall, the assessment method provided academics with more guidance as to what the assessors would be looking for. This move towards more explicit criteria regarded as essential for transparency and fairness could, and probably did, result in a shift towards conformity and compliance as well as equity (Henkel 2000:79). The replacement of an overall grading of 'Excellent', 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory', with a graded profile of the quality of provision appeared to attract a higher level of acceptance amongst academic institutions. Despite their reservations about the differential grading methodology of TQA, however, institutions still tended to equate scores of 21 or more as 'Excellent'. The revised methodology continued to emphasise process rather than outcomes, and there was still no mention of standards in addition to quality (Henkel 2000).

7.2 Towards a Single National System of Academic Quality Assurance

Under the terms of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, HEFCE had the statutory responsibility for managing the assessment of the quality of the education, which it funded. The quality assessment process operated alongside the quality audit

machinery, which was the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC).

There was a widespread feeling within the academic community that the system of quality assessment by HEFCE, quality audit by HEQC, together with accreditation requirements, led to overlap and duplication, and were putting an unwarranted strain on universities. In May 1993 Roger Brown, who would shortly take up his post as Chief Executive of HEQC, was reported as hoping to negotiate more streamlined quality controls (Brookman 1993a). In August 1993, Commonwealth Vice Chancellors warned that England's approach to quality assessment was seriously flawed. They regarded the two-pronged approach as an unnatural division, which led to cumbersome and complicated procedures (Jobbins 1993). There was, thus, increasing pressure to develop a single system of academic quality assurance.

Proposals for a single system of quality assurance were made at the Committee of Vice Chancellor's and Principals (CVCP) residential conference, *The Future of Quality Assurance*, in September 1993. These were taken forward with the publication of the CVCP's 11 Point Plan of July 1994. This Plan proposed an audit-based process, which would be augmented by follow-up action based on subject/programme assessment if standards at an institution were identified as a concern. HEFCE would only be involved in the latter case.

On 2 December 1994, the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, announced that she had asked the HEFCE to propose ways in which quality audit and quality assessment could be brought together to create a single system (THES Opinion 1994). The single system would need to fulfil the following requirements:

- to provide assurance that standards of degrees were maintained and were broadly comparable
- to provide assurance that the quality of teaching and learning was such that students had the best opportunity of reaching those standards
- to assist in enabling choices to be made
- to respect academic autonomy while having an external element

- to respect diversity and freedom while addressing value for money and public accountability
- to encourage enhancement and dissemination of good practice
- to be cost-effective and avoid unreasonable burdens on institutions

On 12 April 1995, the HEFCE published its paper *Options for the Development of Quality Assurance* , inviting comment from institutions. The paper presented seven possible models of which the HEFCE believed that only three fulfilled the requirements set out by the Secretary of State. These three options were all based on the revised current practice of quality assessment with institutional level audit retained only as a back up where quality was in doubt. This was obviously at odds with CVCP's recommendations for an audit-based approach backed up by subject assessment where there was cause for concern.

The Chairman of CVCP, Kenneth Edwards, wrote to the Chief Executive of HEFCE, Graeme Davies, on 24 April 1995 in a personal capacity, outlining his new proposals for a single system, operated by a single agency (Sanders 1995). The proposed agency would negotiate with individual institutions an appropriate structure for subject/programme evaluation of teaching quality. Internal institutional reviews would involve external members accredited and approved by the agency. This, it was felt, would satisfy government requirements for accountability. The agency would also undertake regular general reviews of the performance of institutions in relation to teaching quality and these might involve a visit. The agency, referred to at this stage as the Quality Assurance Organisation, would be jointly owned by both institutions and external stakeholders; HEFCE being the principal representative of the latter. These proposals were endorsed by the CVCP at its meeting on 12 May 1995 (Sanders 1995a) and they were welcomed by the HEFCE as a basis for further discussions.

The HEFCE forwarded its report *Developing Quality Assurance in Partnership with the Institutions of Higher Education* to the Secretary of State on 7 June 1995. The proposals were based on a process of evolution to a single quality assurance system, which included the establishment of a Joint Planning Group (JPG) in October 1996 to

set up a single agency, which would take responsibility for the cycle of subject-based assessments from 2000/2001.

The CVCP overwhelmingly rejected the HEFCE proposals stating that, it did not represent a genuine partnership, the timetable was too long and the arrangements were wholly under HEFCE control (Sanders 1995b). The CVCP proposed a single UK-wide quality review process based on self-evaluation with external scrutiny. A single independent agency, whose remit included both quality and academic standards, would co-ordinate the review process. The CVCP recognised that there was significant common ground between its proposals and those of the HEFCE, but it was proposing a more rapid change to a new system and greater devolution of responsibilities to institutions. It proposed that the JPG be established at once, so that the nature of the new arrangements and the agency could be determined by 1995-96 and operable from early 1997.

The Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) published its own proposals: *A Single System of Academic Quality Assurance,* which were, in essence, similar to those of the CVCP. The chairman of HEQC, John Stoddart, responded in a letter of 20 July to the Secretary of State's letter to the CVCP, about the implications of the HEFCE's proposals for the HEQC's non-audit activities. The letter underlined the fact that HEQC would not be sustainable without audit, but that the proposals from the CVCP and the HEQC would enable those functions to continue. The response from the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), representing higher education colleges, was similar to that of the CVCP (Santinelli 1995). The common ground for all of the proposals was for a single system administered by a single independent agency.

On 29 September 1995, the THES reported that the three-year battle for control of the quality assurance process had been won by universities, when Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, agreed with the CVCP proposals. The issues, which had to be taken into account were:

- The structure and governance of the new agency had to protect academic autonomy and allow funding councils to exercise their statutory responsibility for quality assurance
- Current quality audit and assessment programmes would continue until the new agency was ready
- There had to be sufficient independence within the assurance process to allow consistency across assessments, and assessment should not be allowed to rely mainly on self-regulation
- Individual subject cycles should not exceed more than two years
- The HEQC would continue to advise on degree awarding powers and university titles
- Welsh, Northern Irish and Scottish government departments and funding bodies would be involved in the planning process, but without committing to join the new body at this stage. (THES 1995)

The first steps towards forming the single body were taken the following week when a Quality Forum, convened by the Chairman of CVCP, Gareth Roberts, met to discuss a timetable and process for the unified scheme.

7.3 Joint Planning Group

Following the initiative by HEFCE, CVCP and SCOP, a Joint Planning Group (JPG) was established towards the end of 1995, to commence work in January 1996. Its remit was to produce proposals for developing quality assurance arrangements, including proposals for a single agency. The Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Gillian Shephard, agreed the terms of reference and membership (including Sir William Fraser as Chair) proposed by the informal group, which comprised representatives from CVCP, HEFCE, SCOP, the Welsh funding council (HEFCW) and the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (COSHEP).

The aims of the group would be to develop, in detail, proposals for a new agency and to produce an agreed implementation plan. The primary function of the new agency would be to provide a service for assuring the quality of higher education and the

standards of programmes and awards for higher education institutions (HEIs) in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and, if appropriate, HEIs in Scotland. The aim was to start the new Agency by January 1997.

In pursuit of its aims the Group had to have regard to:

- The conditions set out in the letters to the Chairman of CVCP and the Chief Executive of HEFCE from the Secretary of State for Education and Employment dated 21 September 1995 headed *Developing Quality Assurance in Partnership with Institutions of Higher Education.*
- The letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland from the Chairman of COSHEP dated 21 September 1995 and the reply from the Secretary of State for Scotland dated 22 September 1995 headed *Further Arrangements for Quality Assurance of Higher Education.*
- The CVCP proposals submitted to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on 20 July 1995 documented in *Developing Quality Assurance in Partnership with Institutions of Higher Education.*
- The HEFCW submission to the Secretary of State for Wales dated June 1995, *The Development of Quality Assurance in Wales.*
- The SCOP submission to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment dated July 1995 (HEFCE 1996:Annex A, 5)

There also had to be the necessary consultation with HEIs, the representative bodies, with the Funding Councils and other bodies as appropriate including HEQC. The JPG was required to report to the Secretaries of State and others on a three-monthly basis and, following consultation, provide them with a final report (HEFCE 1996).

The JPG recommended the establishment of a single agency as soon as possible and the relationship between this agency, the institutions and the funding councils should be one of partnership and co-operation. This single agency should replace the HEQC, all of whose functions would be transferred to the new agency, as should the main quality assessment functions of those funding councils which chose to contract with the agency for the discharge of those functions. It was the JPG's view that the new

agency would operate an integrated process of quality assurance, rather than merely a continuation of audit and assessment under a single body, thus eliminating overlap and duplication (HEFCE 1996).

Finding an acceptable compromise between autonomy and accountability appeared, initially, to remain elusive despite the best efforts of the JPG. The JPG responded to criticisms arising from its first report and its draft final report, published at the end of 1996, was accepted by the CVCP, the HEFCE and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment (Brown 1996).

The JPG proposed that the agency would enter into service level agreements with institutions' representative bodies and with funding bodies in order to enable the agency to:

- confirm that the institution's internal quality assurance procedures were working effectively
- identify and disseminate information about innovation and best practice in teaching, learning and student assessment
- provide reports about quality and standards in individual institutions, subjects, programmes and aspects of provision and about quality and standards for both domestic and overseas audiences
- undertake quality enhancement activities
- focus on those issues necessary for the funding bodies to secure their responsibilities for public accountability and public information

The main elements in the proposed new quality assurance procedure included an eight-year, national review timetable, flexibility to ensure harmonisation of internal and external review requirements and timing of reviews to accommodate professional body accreditation arrangements. The new Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) would take over responsibility for running the current teaching quality assessment activities and all of the HEQC's functions from 1 April 1997.

7.4 The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE)

A month after the JPG commenced work early in 1996, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Gillian Shephard, announced her intention to appoint a National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, to be chaired by Sir Ron Dearing. The Committee was appointed with bipartisan support by the secretaries of state for education and employment, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on 10 May 1996. Its remit was to make recommendations on how the shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students should develop to meet the need of the United Kingdom over the next twenty years, recognising that higher education embraced teaching, learning, scholarship and research. The committee was expected to start work after the Easter of 1996, with a view to reporting by the summer of 1997 i.e. after the next General Election. As it turned out, the committee reported shortly after the establishment of the QAA, and its recommendations had a significant influence on the QAA's work. The THES published *Dearing's Summary* on 25 July 1997.

Terms of Reference

The committee should have regard within the constraints of the Government's other spending priorities and affordability to the following principles:

- there should be maximum participation in initial higher education by young and mature students and in lifetime learning by adults, having regard to the needs of individuals, the nation and the future labour market;
- students should be able to choose between a diverse range of courses, institutions, modes and locations of study;
- standards of degrees and other higher education qualifications should be at least maintained and assured;
- the effectiveness of teaching and learning should be enhanced;
- learning should be increasingly responsive to employment needs and include the development of general skills, widely valued by employment;

- higher education's contribution to basic, strategic and applied research should be maintained and enhanced particularly in subjects where UK research has attained international standards of excellence or in Technology Foresight priority areas;
- arrangements for student support should be fair and transparent, and support the principles above;
- higher education should be able to recruit, retain and motivate staff of the appropriate calibre
- value for money and cost-effectiveness should be obtained in the use of resources

(THES 1997:ii)

In its introductory comment, the committee expressed concern about planned further reductions in the unit of funding for higher education. If these were carried forward, it would have been halved in 25 years and the Dearing Committee believed that this would damage both the quality and effectiveness of higher education. They, therefore, recommended that students made a contribution to the cost of their higher education once they were in work. A further recommendation was that over the long term, public spending on higher education should increase with the growth in Gross Domestic Product (THES 1997).

Seven working groups spearheaded Sir Ron Dearing's official inquiry into Higher Education, one of which covered teaching, quality and standards. A number of recommendations about quality and standards were made by the NCIHE and these played a major part in setting the agenda of the work for the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

The Dearing model for quality assurance could be summarised as follows:

- A framework of qualifications with agreed credits and levels of achievements
- The development of recognised standards of awards
- A learning experience for students which enabled them to meet the standards of the award

- Clear and accurate information for students, employers and others about the content, standards and delivery of programmes
- Confidence, internally and externally, that standards were assured and that the quality of education supported those standards through a system which was easy to understand and not burdensome to operate
- The potential for action to be taken swiftly to protect students, and the reputation of higher education more widely, if there were problems with standards or quality

These were matched by a number of specific recommendations, the most significant of which for the QAA were that the Agency should:

- include in its remit quality assurance and public information, standards verification and the maintenance of a qualifications framework. The arrangements for these should be encompassed in a code of practice, which every institution should be required to adopt
- work with institutions to establish small, expert teams to provide benchmark information on standards, operating within the framework of qualifications
- work with universities and other degree awarding institutions to create a national pool of external examiners
- review the arrangements in place for granting degree awarding powers

(THES 1997:iii/24 & 25).

In addition the NCIHE recommended the establishment of a professional Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT) whose functions would be to accredit training programmes, commission research and development in learning and teaching, and to stimulate innovation (THES 1997 iii/14). The NCIHE stated that:

- Institutions should develop or seek access to programmes for teacher training of their staff and that all institutions should seek national accreditation of such programmes from the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (THES 1997:iii/13)
- All new full-time academic staff with teaching responsibilities should be required to achieve at least associate membership of the Institute for Learning and

Teaching in Higher Education for the successful completion of probation (THES 1997:iii/48).

The NCIHE also made recommendations on student participation, use of information technology, research support, industrial involvement, enterprise, and governance. In addition the Committee made specific recommendations regarding the future of Scottish higher education, the NCIHE's Scottish Committee being chaired by Sir Ron Garrick.

Consultations on the NCIHE's report *Higher Education in the Learning Society* were closed in October 1997. Dearing's proposed quality assurance regime was not without its critics in the sector. Cambridge University warned that the proposals would make a costly, prescriptive and interventionist system even worse. Compulsory codes of practice, which would become a condition of funding by 2001, were regarded as potentially problematic, as was the proposed pool of external examiners with enhanced powers (THES 1997a). Dearing also appeared to impose uniformity, effectively ducking the issue of diversity (THES 1997b).

7.5 The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the New Quality Review Methodology

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education was established on 27 March 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for higher education institutions throughout the UK. Its establishment was recommended by the JPG, with the approval of Government, by the higher education funding councils and the representative bodies of the institutions of higher education.

The Agency is an independent body established as a company limited by guarantee and having charitable status. The members of the Company are the bodies representing higher education institutions, but the Board, chaired by Mr Christopher Kenyon, was structured in order to guarantee the independence of the Agency. Mr John Randall, took up his post as the Agency's first Chief Executive on 1 July 1997. Despite this proposed independence it became clear that the Department for

Education and Employment (DfEE) networked closely with the agency, and there was an expectation that the QAA would be responsive to government priorities (Harvey 2002:250).

The Agency inherited the staff and functions of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) and the Quality Assessment Division of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on 1 August 1997 and 1 October 1997 respectively. It established a Scottish Advisory Committee to assume responsibility for HEQC's work in relation to Scottish institutions (QAA 1997). The Agency assumed responsibility for the funding council's planned programme of subject reviews in institutions in England, Northern Ireland and Wales during the 1997-98 academic session. HEFCE's *Forward Programme for Quality Assessment* (1995) provided for the review of provision in 13 subjects/programmes between 1998 and 2000. The QAA took over responsibility for carrying out this programme of reviews, under the terms of a service level agreement with the HEFCE.

Quality audits and subject assessment in 1997-98 were conducted in accordance with the existing documented processes and procedures of HEQC, HEFCE and HEFCW respectively, adapted where appropriate to reflect the proposals of the JPG. Audit and assessment work, notably the subject/programme reviews to be undertaken for the HEFCE in 1998-2000 were at a fairly advanced stage. It was proposed, therefore, that this cycle of continuation audit and subject reviews would also be completed, though again implementing the changes proposed by the JPG (QAA 1997).

The institutions due to be visited for audit were those who had been audited in 1991-92 by the CVCP's Academic Audit Unit (AAU). The QAA expected that all of these institutions would respond positively to the invitation to submit themselves for continuation audit. Initially, however, a number of universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, tested the authority of the QAA by refusing to submit to continuation audit, saying that the quality assurance plans were too uncertain for them to sign up to a visit in 2000. Cambridge was reported as saying that it was ready to face up to the Government's reserve powers in the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, in its defiance of the QAA (Tysome 1998).

In July 1997, the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) made a number of specific recommendations about quality and standards and these played a major part in setting the agenda of work for the Agency. The QAA identified four principles, which would underpin its approach to implementing the Dearing agenda.

1. Accountability for public funds spent on higher education
2. Ownership, including partnership, retention of peer review and a respect for diversity of purposes
3. Enhancement of the quality of higher education provision
4. Reduction of the perceived burden of external scrutiny by streamlining external quality assurance and working closely with the professional and statutory bodies (PSBs). (QAA 1997a)

The Dearing Report, which called for the new quality assurance system to be up and running by 2000, proposed a more outcomes-focused model for assuring both quality and standards. In view of this, QAA proposed further changes in the review method for Subject Review 1998-2000. These included an increased emphasis on the structured review of student work during visits and more systematic engagement with the reports of external examiners. In addition, providers would be asked to state in their self-assessments their internal arrangements for peer review of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning sessions that reviewers observed during 1998-2000 would not be graded individually (QAA 1997a).

Continuation audit would focus principally on four areas, these being academic standards, the institution's strategic approach to quality and standards, the learning infrastructure, and communications. The process laid great store by the 'analytical account', which institutions were required to submit in advance of the audit visit and which analysed the effectiveness of the institution's own internal quality assurance processes. The continuation audit visits during 1997 or 1998 would count as part of the first round of the institutional reviews envisaged in the Dearing Report. Dearing suggested that institutional review should consist mainly of a check on institutions'

adherence to codes of practice, drawn up by QAA, and covering all aspects of academic quality assurance. The move from continuation audit to institutional reviews would be phased to reflect the development, adoption and implementation of the codes of practice (QAA 1997a).

In March 1998, the QAA published its consultation paper, *An agenda for quality,* on the development of the six main interlocking elements of the proposed model in relation to:

1. Developing qualifications frameworks in the UK
2. Developing a template for programme specification
3. Developing benchmark information on subject threshold standards
4. Defining the subject areas for benchmarking work
5. Developing the codes of practice and institutional review
6. Strengthening the external examiner system and developing the role of the registered external examiner (REE). (QAA 1998)

Even before consultation was completed on 22 May 1998, the QAA was re-thinking its plans, a leaked internal document was reported to have revealed (THES 1998). QAA prepared to review its proposals for a pool of registered external examiners (REEs) in response to criticisms from Russell and '94 group (informal, self-selected representative groups of higher education institutions) vice chancellors. This move wrong-footed the CVCP, which had issued a position statement supporting the original proposals (Tysome 1998a). The Russell and '94 groups favoured a quality assurance system that concentrated on institution-wide reviews and periodic reviews of programmes backed up by refinements to the existing external examiner system (Tysome 1998a). They felt that the original proposals were too bureaucratic, interventionist, a threat to diversity and an invitation to academics to play compliance games, rather than genuinely commit to improving quality (Tysome and Baty 1998). On the other hand, the funding councils felt that some aspects of the QAA's blueprint were too weak, particularly with respect to institutions that seemed to be a high risk, and were only prepared to endorse the blueprint after these had been strengthened (Baty and Loder 1998).

In October 1998, the QAA published the new quality assurance framework in *Higher Education 4*. Following consultation on the proposed methodology, programme specifications and subject benchmarks remained as central features of the new model. The QAA had canvassed two possible ways forward with respect to Dearing's proposal for an enhanced role for external examiners. The first was an elaboration of the Dearing model involving some external examiners reporting directly to the Agency. The second envisaged an Academic Reviewer appointed by and reporting to the Agency, working with external examiners and the associated internal processes of institutions. Institutions had expressed significant concerns about the former approach, since it was seen as confusing the reporting responsibilities of external examiners and creating conflicts of interests. As a result, the QAA did not proceed with this proposal, but opted to trial the second model.

The basic framework of the proposed new model was as follows:

- Each institution would be able to propose to the QAA a review cycle of not more than six years in length to meet their internal review cycle and minimise duplication
- The QAA would seek to agree with professional or statutory bodies the timing of a review
- There would be forty two subject units corresponding to the subject areas for national benchmark standards
- Academic Reviewers comprising practising academics with relevant expertise or persons from professional and employment backgrounds would be appointed, trained and remunerated by the Agency
- For the purposes of subject/programme review, the Academic Reviewers would report on both outcomes and the quality of learning opportunities.
- Academic Reviewers would observe validation and review events and a sample of meetings of course committees and faculty boards or their equivalent. The views of both students and staff would be sought and, where necessary, the Reviewers would observe a sample of teaching and learning activities.

- At the institutional level, Academic Reviewers would assess the robustness of institutional arrangements to safeguard the standards of awards. Some evidence would be drawn from the involvement of Reviewers at the programme level.
- Reviewers would observe directly some procedures at the institutional level, including those covered by the Codes of Practice to be promulgated by the Agency.

(QAA 1998a)

A two-year trial period took place commencing October 1998, mainly involving institutions in Scotland and Wales, where the existing review cycle had already been completed. The existing QAA audit programme together with the completion of the full cycle of subject reviews in England and Northern Ireland, were scheduled to run until the end of 2001. From then on, the new model of institutional reports would be used, drawing in the first instance on the early findings of the new programme reports, as well as subject reviews carried out under the existing procedures. To assist the transition to the new model, it was proposed that, from 1999, audit reports would include a view of the confidence that might be placed on the reliability of the institution's management of its academic quality and standards (QAA 1998a).

A revised and refined specification of the new quality assurance method was scheduled for late 1999 when the QAA published further guidance on the new method (QAA 1999a). The Agency confirmed that the new approach aimed to assure the overall standards of awards, outcome standards of individual programmes and the quality of learning opportunities. In addition it would incorporate an efficient and effective process to eliminate duplication of effort plus a differential intensity of scrutiny.

For the next subject review cycle, which ran from 2000 to 2006, QAA stated that it would report at three main levels. At the programme level, programme outcome standards would be concerned with the fitness of purpose of programme objectives (in relation to benchmark standards and qualification levels), the fitness for purpose of curricula and assessment arrangements (in relation to the programme objectives), and student achievement. The standards judgement would not be graded, but there would

be a narrative commentary addressing strengths and weaknesses, by reference, where appropriate, to the relevant sections of the Code of Practice.

At the subject level QAA would report on the quality of learning opportunities, which would address the effectiveness of teaching, learning resources and personal academic support in promoting student learning, and student progression and achievement. The Agency proposed that one of four judgements would be made in respect to the three main aspects of learning opportunities i.e. 'highly commendable', 'commendable', 'approved' and 'failing'.

Reporting at the institutional level on the management of standards and quality would incorporate the robustness and security of institutional systems relating to the awarding function. This would involve in particular, reporting on arrangements for dealing with initial approval, review and re-approval of programmes; the management of institution-wide credit and qualification arrangements and the management of assessment procedures. Where awards might be gained through programmes offered in collaboration with others, the management and effectiveness of the institution's collaborative arrangements would be addressed.

Reports at institutional level would conclude with judgements about the confidence that could be placed in institutional systems for managing quality and standards. Such a report would be produced once in each cycle and would draw on evidence generated since the previous report (or continuation audit). At the mid-point between reports, there would be an interim appraisal for the Agency and the institution to consider the evidence accumulating from subject reviews, reviews of collaborative provision or other engagements with institutional processes.

There were two aspects to the intensity of scrutiny proposed. The first was the expectation that the new method would be more efficient and would consume less institutional resource. This was referred to as the need to operate with a 'light touch'. The second was the variability of intensity i.e. that intervention would be in inverse proportion to success (QAA 1999a).

By January 2001 the standards infrastructure was well underway and the new Academic Review method was operating in Scotland and continued throughout the academic year 2001/2002 (QAA 2001). There were, however, increasing criticisms of the QAA in general and its Chief Executive, John Randall, in particular. The criticisms included the QAA's governance (Baty 1999), its lack of accountability and value for money (Baty 1999a), and the overly bureaucratic, prescriptive and interventionist regulation of higher education that was being proposed. Two principal concerns were expressed regarding the new quality framework. These were ' (a) the complexity and feasibility of the new framework and its ability in practice to produce reliable and consistent outcomes and (b) the extent to which it will accommodate increasing diversity of mission and practice' (Brown, 2000:340).

It was obvious that there was also a significant PR problem, and Randall was seen as intransigent and responsible for alienating universities (THES 2001, MacLeod 2001). There was also a suggestion of a rift between Randall and the QAA's chairman, Christopher Kenyon (Alderman 2001a). Nevertheless, the announcement in March 2001, by the education secretary, David Blunkett, following reported lobbying by the Russell Group, that subject inspections would be cut by 40% and that those departments which had gained excellent ratings were unlikely to be re-inspected, came as something of a bombshell (MacLeod 2001).

Universities UK (UUK), representing vice chancellors, cautiously welcomed the announcement. However, proposals for a 40% reduction in teaching inspections failed to stem the crisis. The London School of Economics resolved to break free from QAA scrutiny, leading the Russell Group in open revolt, stating that the role of the QAA needed wholesale review (Baty 2001). The QAA was reported as being furious that it had been forced by the HEFCE into accepting the 40% cut. Randall warned that the system could be open to judicial review and the whole regime would lack 'legitimacy' if plans were rushed through (Baty 2001a).

In July 2001, the HEFCE in association with UUK, SCOP and the QAA, published consultation proposals (HEFCE 01/45) for a revised method for the quality assurance of teaching and learning in higher education. This envisaged that full subject-level

reviews would be conducted on a selective basis only, principally to follow up areas of concern or weaknesses identified during an institutional audit. It also suggested that during the three-year transitional period, 2002 to 2005, there would be a limited and selective form of subject review for institutions pending their institutional audit.

In response to one of the proposals in HEFCE 01/45, a Task Group chaired by Professor Ron Cooke (Vice Chancellor of the University of York) prepared recommendations on the information about quality and standards that all higher education institutions should be expected to collect and have available. The Task Group also recommended which elements of that information should be publicly available. These included summaries of external examiners' reports, results of student feedback surveys, summaries of the HEI's own programme reviews and information on the institution's strategy for raising the quality of learning and teaching (HEFCE 01/66).

If the proposals to change external reviews of higher education were accepted, it could mean that as few as 10% of courses would be reviewed (Alderman 2001a). Randall regarded the reduction from 100% to 10% as 'a jump too far' (Clare 2001), and on 21 August 2001 he resigned. His departure was reported to have sparked a backlash from students, employers and politicians who were against the plans for a 'light-touch' regime (Baty 2001b). Whilst the Russell group demanded abolition of all subject level inspections, UUK and SCOP supported the new system, stating that it would provide both better public information and a less burdensome process (MacLeod 2001).

In November 2001, the QAA, with Peter Williams as acting chief executive, produced a 'preliminary operational description' of the new method, which was due to become operational in September 2002 (QAA 2001a). The preliminary description represented a first shot at designing a workable method for institutional audit and selective subject reviews proposed in the consultative document.

There was broad support across the sector for a new model that recognised that institutions had primary responsibility for quality and standards, operated with a

'light-touch', provided useful public information and focused on enhancement alongside accountability. The proposed model would mean an end to universal subject review and evolution towards an audit-based method that placed greater reliance on institutions' own quality assurance processes (QAA 2001a:3 & 4). There was clear consensus in two particular areas where the proposals raised serious difficulties and needed re-consideration. The form and function of the proposed audit trails, or 'subject drill downs', to be undertaken by subject specialist members of an audit team could too readily be interpreted as subject review by another name, and information requirements proposed by the Task Group might be unacceptably burdensome (QAA 2001a).

In February 2002, the QAA confirmed that Margaret Hodge would give the go-ahead to the final blueprint for the new regime since HEFCE had insisted on obtaining ministerial clearance. Margaret Hodge questioned the 'light-touch' approach as being insufficiently rigorous to ensure public accountability, and she hoped that the Cooke report would contain measures to increase accountability (Baty 2002a).

The operational description for the new method was published in March 2002 (QAA 2002), and followed up a month later with a new draft handbook for consultation describing how the new institutional audit procedure was expected to work (QAA 2002a). After further discussions by HEFCE, QAA, UUK and SCOP, it had been agreed that, for most institutions, there would be no further subject reviews, but there would be a new developmentally-focused form of engagement at the discipline level during the transitional period.

The new review method would incorporate a six-year cycle of institutional audits, rather than the five-year cycle envisaged in HEFCE 01/45, and institutions that had had a continuation audit between 1999-2001 might be subject to a less extensive process during the shorter first cycle. Throughout the six-year period, HEIs would be making publicly available a range of up-to-date information on quality and standards and would be conducting their own internal monitoring and review procedures. At the three year mid-point, the Agency would expect to revisit each institution to review progress since the previous institutional audit, and discuss the institution's strategic

plan for sustaining and raising quality and standards over the three years until the next institutional audit.

Institutional audits were expected to examine and make judgements on three main areas:

1. The effectiveness of the institutions' internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms in the light of the QAA's *Code of Practice*, and the way in which the quality of its programmes and standards were regularly reviewed and resulting recommendations implemented
2. The accuracy, completeness, integrity and reliability of the information, including programme specification, that an institution published about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards
3. A number of examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work at the level of the programme ('discipline audit trails') or across the institution as a whole ('themative enquiries').

Audit teams would focus their exploration on internal quality assurance reviews, the experience of students as learners and academic standards expected and achieved. They would take into account the use made of the framework for higher education qualifications, the precepts of the codes of practice and subject benchmark statements together with the development, use and publication of programme specifications. The quality assurance of teaching staff, including the criteria for appointment of academic staff and the ways in which teaching effectiveness was appraised, improved and rewarded would also come under scrutiny. It would be expected that there would be a strong and scrupulous use of fully independent external examiners in summative assessment procedures, and similar use of independent external participants in internal review at discipline and /or programme level.

A draft report, following a predetermined template and including conclusions on the discipline audit trails or thematic enquiries, would be submitted to the institution for comment. There would be no grading or ranking. The final report would be made publicly available. Where recommendations suggesting important weaknesses needed

urgent attention, there would be a programme of follow-up action (QAA 2002). During the transition, 2002-2005, before the new regime of six-yearly audit cycles reached a steady state, full subject reviews would take place in institutions that had a poor record from the 1995-2001 round i.e. less than 17 out of 24 and/or profiles containing too many grade 2's (Baty 2002b).

The new regime will not come fully into force until 2005. During the interim, institutions not yet audited will be subject to either a limited programme of full subject reviews using the discarded academic subject review methodology or a limited programme of developmental discipline-level engagements. Brown questions whether this is a good or sensible use of public funds (Brown 2002:4).

So how does the new regime compare to the original TQA system? The NCIHE recommended a strengthening of the external quality assurance process with greater attention paid to the comparability of academic standards. As a result, the new system aims to ensure that each institution maintains its degree standards, that programmes deliver the intended outcomes, and that students meet the standards required by the institution for its awards, by relevant national subject benchmarks and by accrediting bodies. In addition institutions are required to maintain and publish an expanded set of quantitative and qualitative information for potential students, about the quality of learning opportunities and the extent to which the institution meets expectations of good practice in relation to support for student learning.

The new external quality assurance process is, thus, in a number of respects superior to the previous arrangements in that it is far more comprehensive with its focus on standards as well as quality, plus the provision of public information. It also allows for potential integration of subject and institutional level scrutiny, though how easy it will be to secure integration is yet to be seen. There is also a renewed emphasis on the responsibilities of institutions as awarding bodies for guaranteeing the quality of what is offered in their name, and the prospect of greater reliance on internal quality assurance procedures. In addition, 'there will be no more of the graded judgements which have played such havoc with the integrity of quality assurance' (Brown 2002:4).

Programme specifications, by encouraging an outcomes approach to learning, should assist the improvement of the quality of information about an institution's academic standards as well as promoting a more systematic approach to curriculum design (Norman 2000). Programme specifications and benchmark standards stem from HEQC's work on standards from the Graduate Standards Programme. HEQC, however, envisaged these as helping institutions to map and improve their programmes and awards against practice generally, rather than as a means of external regulation of those programmes and awards (Brown 1999:53). The HEQC approach was, therefore, formative rather than summative, unlike that of the QAA.

Despite the perceived gains, the complexity and feasibility of the framework and the resources needed to manage it have given rise for serious concerns. Institutions will have to engage in a large amount of developmental work in preparation for the implementation of the new procedure. It is also doubtful whether the new external review procedure will lead to any significant reduction in regulatory effort, although it is highly likely that there will be a 'displacement effect' away from course leaders and subject teams towards central administrators (Brown 2002:4).

The post-Dearing thrust on standards is also seen as a potential threat to diversity and innovation, and the new arrangements make no reference to an institution's mission. In addition, the QAA is mostly concerned with accountability and conformity rather than quality enhancement. Whilst acknowledging the need for accountability, ultimately it is enhancement that is the key to improving quality. A critical element, therefore, will be the balance between the reliance placed on external and internal accountability mechanisms. Questions also arise about the accountability of the QAA itself, the quality of the Academic Reviewers and the validity and reliability of their judgements and findings.

Whilst acknowledging the differences in the quality review processes, the basic approach to academic quality assurance remains the same in that it relies heavily on three main elements i.e. peer review, a self-assessment and statistical or performance indicators, followed by a visit resulting in a report that usually becomes a public

document (Harvey 2002). Self-evaluation, in the right context is useful for encouraging fundemental reviews of objectives, practices and outcomes. However, self-assessment is often taken seriously only if peer review follows. With respect to the assessment of the quality of teaching, however, peer review is not regarded as particularly effective in establishing what is going on (Harvey 2002:257) or of commanding academic support (Henkel 2000:78). Statistical indicators also have their limitations as measures of quality performance and invite creative accounting (Harvey 2002:257). Harvey, thus, concludes that a focus on documentation and peer review is an inefficient way of encouraging and supporting the development of student-oriented learning facilitation (Harvey 2002:260).

The new external review process, therefore, is comprehensive but bureaucratic, prescriptive, 'method-led' (Harvey 2002:260), costly and 'almost impossibly complex to manage' (Brown 2002:4). It is likely to encourage the adoption of defensive strategies, gamesmanship and result in a greater shift to conformity and compliance. Enhancement is an 'add-on' that is presumed to result from compliance with the method (Harvey 2002:260). The quality assurance process should be one which truly recognises that the universities themselves have prime responsibility for quality assurance, engages student learning and promotes a culture of continuous improvement and open dialogue.

Quality is multi-dimensional and somewhat intangible. It is inappropriate to regard 'quality' as a problem that should be 'inspected in' or 'controlled'. Perhaps the QAA should examine the teachings of the quality 'guru's' when designing quality assurance systems. To the quality experts such as Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran, quality systems should incorporate principles such as credible and long-term commitment of senior managers, leadership, the creation of a culture for 'quality', genuine team-work and co-operation, and open two-way communication, as well as a customer-focus. Performance appraisal is not recommended since it is perceived as fostering competition and conflict and, hence, is an obstacle to co-operation. Continuous improvement involving everybody (i.e. the philosophy of kaizen) whilst important is not, on its own, sufficient. In addition, innovation is essential and a pre-requisite for this is what Deming (1986) describes as joy in work, which requires as a minimum

empowerment of staff, education and training at all levels, and appropriate recognition and rewards.

7.6 Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT)

In addition to its influence on the work of the QAA, the NCIHE was instrumental in the establishment of a professional Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) in higher education. The ILT was launched in June 1999 as a direct result of recommendations (numbers 13, 14 and 48) in the Dearing Report. Paul Clark, Director of Learning and Teaching at the Scottish Higher Education Council (SHEFC), and formerly director of quality assessment division at HEFCE was appointed as its Chief Executive. Initial funding was provided by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales and from the Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment in Northern Ireland. It was expected that membership subscriptions, and membership and accreditation services would enable the ILT to be self-financing by 2005.

The ILT was established as an independent professional body with charitable status, to enhance the status of teaching, improve the experience of learning, and support innovation (www.ilt.ac.uk). One of the ILT's major functions was the maintenance of standards of practice through the accreditation of programmes of training in learning and teaching in higher education. In addition, individuals could apply for membership, eligibility being dependent on experience or the successful completion of an ILT-accredited programme leading to either membership (ILTM) or associateship (ILTA).

Some academics were vociferous critics of the establishment of the ILT, but others, particularly the newer teacher-led institutions, believed that the kind of learned society model would bring a long overdue injection of professionalism into university teaching (Utley 1998). Some universities complained that the proposed compulsory licences for lecturers to teach in higher education, was a threat to their academic freedom to appoint their own staff. As a result, the compulsory licence proposal was dropped (Utley 1998a).

Nationally accredited training programmes existed before Dearing and the ILT. The Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) was established in 1993 to develop a professional standard in higher education. SEDA validated, against national criteria, universities' training programmes for teaching. In addition, the Universities and Colleges Staff Development Agency (UCoSDA), which was set up in 1989 as an agency of the CVCP, carried out research and promoted continuing professional development for academics. Some felt, therefore, that the ILT had added an unwanted layer of bureaucracy, and had not tackled the basis of the problem, which was the absence of a promotion and reward structure for academics who concentrated on high quality teaching (Alderman 2001).

Despite any initial reservations, the THES reported that less than one month after the ILT started to accept applications for membership, demand was far outstripping even the most optimistic forecasts (Utley 1999). In March 2002, however, the Guardian reported that the ILT was 'still struggling to establish itself as a voice for the profession with the authority to set standards of competence for staff in higher education'. Despite winning some backing in new universities and NATFHE, it was 'still anathema to staff in the old universities and their union, the AUT' (MacLeod 2002).

To the concern of those in the higher education sector, the government was reported to be pushing through a single body to set standards for lecturers in universities and further education colleges. As part of a national drive to upgrade skills and boost productivity, ministers announced that they would replace the 72 national training organisations with about half that number of sector skills councils representing the voice of the employers. The Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA) and the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) expressed an interest in jointly forming one of the new councils. The merger could have far-reaching effects on who would be allowed to teach in universities and colleges, and what qualifications they would have to acquire. The move also called into question the future of the ILT, which was franchised by HESDA to set the standards and competences for academic staff in the higher education sector (MacLeod 2002).

In July 2002, THES reported that Paul Clark was leaving the ILT 'amid a shake-up' that raised questions about the agency's future. Only three weeks earlier at the ILT's annual meeting, Dr Clark had assured members of the stability of the ILT and its finances. His departure came at a crucial juncture for the ILT. Sir Ron Cooke, vice-chancellor of the University of York, was leading a review, commissioned by HEFCE, UUK and SCOP, to streamline the teaching quality enhancement work of the ILT, the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and HESDA. The Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC) looked at five options, one of which was to split the ILT (Leon 2002). In its final report the TQEC recommended that there should be a single body, provisionally called the Academy for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, bringing together and supplementing the work of the three existing agencies (TQEC 2003). The ILT welcomed, in principle, the proposal for a unitary body, but with a number of reservations. A period of consultation began, following which the commissioning bodies would decide whether to accept the TQEC's recommendations. The Higher Education Academy was subsequently formed.

7.7 Summary

The development of the quality assessment methodology is examined in some detail to give an indication of the increasing complexity and bureaucracy of the proposed procedure, together with the criticisms levelled at it by the academic community. Events impacting on the methodology, in particular the publication of the recommendations of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE), chaired by Sir Ron Dearing, are included. The Dearing Committee also recommended the establishment of a professional Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) in higher education, and a brief overview of this body is also provided.

The second phase of the quality assessment method operated from April 1995 to September 1996. In response to criticisms of TQA, HEFCE developed the method to include universal visiting, the establishment of a core set of six aspects of provision and the grading of the six aspects on a four-point numerical assessment scale. An

overall judgement at the threshold level was derived from the resulting graded profile. The new methodology was subsequently re-named Subject Review.

There was a widespread feeling within the academic community that the overlap of quality assurance methods, resulted in unwarranted strain on universities, and this led to increasing pressure to develop a single system of academic quality assurance. The first steps towards forming a single quality assurance body were taken in October 1995 with the formation of the Joint Planning Group (JPG). The resulting Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in March 1997. The QAA assumed responsibility for the funding council's planned programme of subject reviews during the 1997-1998 and 1998-2000 sessions, and these were to be conducted in accordance with existing procedures adapted, where appropriate, to reflect the proposals of the JPG.

The NCIHE, reporting in July 1997, made a number of recommendations about quality and standards, which played a major part in setting the agenda of the work of the QAA.

In response to the Dearing report, the QAA proposed that programme specifications and subject benchmarks would be central features of the new quality assurance model. The Dearing Committee recommended a more outcomes-based model of assuring quality and standards, which led the QAA to propose further changes in Subject Review 1998-2000. The move from Continuation Audits to Institutional Reviews, combining both audit and subject reviews, would be phased to reflect the implementation of the QAA's codes of practice.

The Institutional Review model was further refined in preparation for the next subject review cycle, which would run from 2000 to 2006. Academic institutions were increasingly critical of the QAA and the proposed methodology, resulting, in March 2001, with an announcement by David Blunkett that subject inspections would be cut by 40%. The QAA was forced into amending the proposed methodology based on the recognition that institutions had the primary responsibility for quality and standards, and involving a more audit-based, 'light-touch' approach together with selective subject reviews. This methodology, incorporating the standards framework

recommended by Dearing (1997) and the information requirements resulting from the Cooke report was not expected to be fully operational until 2005.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This study focused on academics' perceptions of the impact of the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) on teaching in higher education, with particular reference to its perceived effects on teaching quality and implications for academic i.e. teaching professionalism. The four main aspects examined in the study were:

- the academics' personal interest in, and experience of, teaching in higher education
- their perceptions of the institutional context in terms of value of and support for teaching
- specific procedures for assuring teaching quality in the institutions involved in the study
- the academics' experiences and perceptions of TQA particularly in terms of its potential effect on teaching quality and/or the environment for teaching in higher education.

Individuals have personal views, motivations and orientations, based on their personality and opportunities and so they perceive the world in an individual and necessarily subjective way shaped by their aspirations and personal experiences. Despite individual differences, however, there were common themes on which conclusions could be made. As Lester (1999) points out, in phenomenologically-based research, the strength of inference which can be made increases rapidly once factors start to recur with more than one participant. Such research can, thus, be robust in indicating the presence of factors and their effects on the individuals studied, but it is still necessary to be tentative in suggesting the extent of these in relation to the population from which the participants are drawn.

Based on the findings of the study in relation to the research aims, the discussions in this chapter focus on a number of issues that appeared to be particularly significant during the course of the study. These can broadly be categorised as the status of teaching in higher education, professionalism of university teaching, professional and institutional autonomy, and also issues which were not examined directly, such as the

potential crisis in higher education, collegiality and leadership. The final sections provide some reflections on Institutional Review and indicate how the findings contribute to the existing research literature.

8.1 Status of Teaching in Higher Education

The general perception of the interviewees with respect to teaching in higher education was that there was a lack of:

- value and recognition of university teaching
- career prospects for teachers in higher education
- time available to do a good job at teaching
- opportunities to improve teaching e.g. training and development

One of the most significant findings from the research was the lack of recognition and rewards for excellence in teaching in both the pre- and post-1992 universities involved in the study. Whilst this was acknowledged to some degree in the existing literature, it was not apparent that not only could mediocrity in teaching be accepted, but that excellent teaching might, in fact, be detrimental to an academic's career. In the pre-1992 sector poor teaching was perceived to possibly benefit an academic's career, in that (s)he could be given less teaching and thus have more time for higher profile activities such as research.

Promotion criteria in the institutions studied lacked clarity and were subject to changing agenda and priorities. What was clear, however, was that career progression was very limited in the universities studied, particularly in the post-1992 sector. In the pre-1992 sector promotion was based on research, but the criteria were frequently felt to be 'excessive'. In the post-1992 sector, promotion was based primarily on management responsibilities, though there were some opportunities for those who were more research-oriented. There were no career opportunities in either sector in the institutions studied for those who concentrated solely on higher education teaching. The two pre-1992 institutions were believed to be developing criteria for promotion to senior lectureship based on teaching. The academics felt that this was

primarily the result of the introduction of external quality assessment, in particular TQA. It remained to be seen how this policy would operate in practice.

All of the respondents indicated a strong commitment to, and enjoyment of, teaching. In the pre-1992 universities, where there was a much higher emphasis on research, academics felt that there was a symbiosis between teaching and research, and that they would not like to do one without the other. There was some resentment however that the emphasis in terms of academic staff time was on teaching, but that recognition was so heavily biased towards research. There was thus, pressure to do more research than some would have liked, and this was felt to result not only in poorer quality research but also in a reduction in the quality of their teaching. In the post-1992 institutions, there was an increasing emphasis on research following their promotion to university status, but high teaching loads, plus the lack of a research culture mitigated against them developing a significant research profile.

The pre-1992 institutions in the study did not regard research into teaching as bona-fide research, except in departments specialising in education. Even in the post-1992 institutions, research into teaching in their particular subject discipline gained little institutional support. This, again, was felt to effectively devalue teaching. The findings do not suggest the need to separate teaching and research institutions or departments, but they do suggest that excellence in teaching should be rewarded in addition to excellence in research.

Little effort was made by the institutions studied to ensure that, on appointment, an academic could teach effectively. Appraisal and mentoring arrangements operated spasmodically and there was little in the way of systematic progressive staff development opportunities with respect to teaching. Active appraisal and mentoring schemes are regarded as an essential part of a human resource policy in universities (see Blaxter et al 1998b), and appropriate training is beneficial for all parties to ensure that both operate effectively.

Many of those interviewed had had no training in teaching. Not only were the current training courses felt to be unsuitable but institutions, for the most part, failed to

encourage staff to gain teaching qualifications, by demonstrating that qualifications were valued and/or by providing time allowances to attend courses. There seemed to have been relatively little progress with respect to this issue since the Hale Committee (1961) recommended that all newly appointed staff should undergo training in teaching. Some universities in the study were, however, starting to make some initial training for teaching compulsory for new staff, possibly as a result of the introduction of the external assessment of teaching. The findings indicate that, as a minimum, more attention should be paid to ensuring that, on appointment, academics can teach and/or that appropriate training courses are available prior to or at the commencement of their teaching.

The surprising conclusion with respect to the introduction of TQA, was that the majority in the study actually welcomed an external monitoring system and were more positive about the introduction of TQA than the literature implied. Internal quality management systems such as TQM and ISO 9001 were regarded as having minimal effect on the improvement of teaching. TQA, on the other hand, was perceived as potentially raising the profile of teaching. It had already had some beneficial effects at departmental level and was regarded as potentially being an ally to academic staff, in that it could help them demonstrate that they were effective in maintaining standards. Whilst criticisms of TQA were in evidence in the existing literature, there was much less emphasis on the potential benefits concluded in this study. Echoing the literature, however, the respondents were concerned about the methodology used, including the bureaucracy of the process and perception of control engendered. More specifically they felt that the methodology tended to encourage 'gamesmanship' rather than lead to real, long-term improvements. What was needed, the research indicated, was a 'light-touch' system that was improvement-focused and audit-based at the institutional level. Included in such an audit could be checks to ensure that institutions had appropriate human resource strategies that explicitly value teaching, and reward and promote good teachers.

8.2 Professionalism and University Teaching

University teachers have a dual identity i.e. as teachers and as subject specialists. The higher education and consequent expert knowledge required for professional status is in the subject discipline and not, to any extent, in teaching itself. Less than a quarter of those interviewed had gained a teaching qualification. An in-depth knowledge of the subject discipline was regarded as significantly more important and respondents were concerned, therefore, that study for a teaching qualification might divert effort from the development of the subject. In addition, there was no recognition for gaining teaching qualifications in the institutions studied.

On the other hand the academics acknowledged that anything that contributed to the improvement of teaching was to be commended and encouraged. Training for teaching was, therefore, regarded as valuable both for themselves and their students. It was important, however, that institutions regarded such training as a bona fide activity and made appropriate resources, including time, available. Interviewees felt that it was advisable to ensure teaching competence, possibly by the provision of a 'basic toolkit', particularly for new staff and where there was a need on a remedial basis. The need for structured continual professional development programmes for university teaching was noted.

The theme of higher education teaching as an apprenticeship was also raised. This seemed to imply that some respondents, at least, viewed university teaching more as a craft than a profession. One academic actually acknowledged that he did not see himself as a professional teacher. Crafts do not presuppose higher education, but would incorporate highly specialised vocational training by means of trade school or long apprenticeship (Friedson 1994). Interestingly, Miller (1995) refers to the university lecturer as a 'craftsperson' (Miller 1995:161). Perhaps it is the perception of teaching as a craft rather than a professional activity that contributes to it being undervalued in academia. Yet in many respects, teaching in higher education meets the criteria of a quintessential profession, as concluded by Friedson (1994) and Warren Piper (1994).

The issue as to whether university teaching can be regarded as a profession, is thus complex. The paradox of university teachers being in the 'business of qualifications' and espousing the need for professionalism, whilst at the same time not being qualified in teaching, did not escape those interviewed. Whilst academics continue to be judged on the quality of their research with little or no recognition of their teaching, however, this situation is likely to remain. The introduction of the assessment of teaching quality, therefore, by raising the profile of teaching was regarded as potentially leading to the improvement of the status of university teaching and increasing its professionalism. This was contrary to the existing literature, which focused more on the possible undermining of professionalism resulting from the introduction of TQA (e.g. Trow 1994).

In order to promote the professionalism of university teaching, therefore, the study suggests that institutions should make accredited training available for all staff. For new staff without an appropriate teaching qualification, attendance on an accredited training programme could be a condition of successful completion of probation. For existing staff, institutions could make career-long, high quality continual professional development opportunities available and ensure that staff had appropriate time and incentives to engage with such opportunities. It is also important that the content of training courses is relevant to the academics i.e. takes into account disciplinary differences, to encourage active engagement. In addition, the study indicated that it was important that institutions recognised such qualifications both in their appointment, and in their reward and promotion procedures.

8.3 Professional and Institutional Autonomy

Self-regulation and autonomy are key characteristics of professional organisations (Friedson 1994). It has been argued that as the university sector's need for public funding has increased, there has been a corresponding increase in the need for accountability, thus increasing pressure on autonomy (Altbach 1991). Whilst acknowledging the need for accountability and quality assurance of university teaching, most interviewees doubted that the methodology used in the TQA process was appropriate. TQA was described as a bureaucratic paper-chase, in which

institutions tended to adopt a game-playing approach. Respondents were also concerned at the perception of control generated by TQA and the potential to standardise the creativity out of the teaching situation. These were themes and criticisms that were also echoed in the 'Quality Debate' in the THES in 1993.

Bureaucratic 'rational' systems can act as controlling devices which limit individual freedom and can, thus, potentially be counter-productive in universities in which creativity and innovation are essential, both for development of subject disciplines, and motivation of staff and students alike. There were, thus, some concerns about the effects of TQA on professional autonomy, though for the most part, academics felt that it did not erode their academic freedom, since it did not impact on the content of what was taught. Any compliance engendered by TQA would be of limited effect and only be in terms of the process of teaching, rather than the content. In Friedson's (1994) terms, therefore, TQA would not undermine the professionalism of the university teacher.

Participants expressed some concern, however, as to whether the assessment would be linked to funding and thus used to control resources. If so, the introduction of TQA was regarded as a potential threat to institutional autonomy. This concern was also raised in the research literature. Surprisingly, however, some interviewees felt that this was not necessarily a bad thing. One even went so far as to welcome a tighter system of peer review of teaching quality. The main reason for this, was that they felt that external pressures on the universities was more effective than internal pressure e.g. with respect to resources. The government's apparent lack of trust (Trow 1994) in the capabilities of institutions to regulate themselves appeared to be felt by the academics themselves. Friedson (1994) observed that administrative managers operated more bureaucratically, and less collegially, when funding was increasingly restricted. In addition, whilst academics are subjected to evaluation, the quality of management per se is rarely evaluated (Harvey 2000:251). As writers have commented, good management and leadership is the best defence against challenges to autonomy (Dearlove 1997, Rear 1994, Trow 1994), and recommended appropriate staff development for those in, or destined for, leadership roles (Dearlove 1997, Knight and Trowler 2000).

High student numbers and modularised systems in higher education can lead to a factory-like atmosphere, hence the noted 'massification' and 'commodification' of higher education. As student numbers increase, management of an academic institution becomes more complex and this frequently contributes to increasing bureaucracy and managerialist tendencies. It is hardly surprising that the increased level of bureaucracy in universities in response to the perceived need for greater efficiency, predictability, quantification and use of non-human technology led to the term 'McUniversity' (Ritzer 2000). The introduction of a quality management system such as ISO 9001 only appears to add to the problem. Interviewees repeatedly commented on its counter-productive bureaucratic aspects, including creating extra work for them, whilst having minimal beneficial effect on teaching and learning. Some benefits were noted, however, but only with respect to administrative processes, and the consistency of the student experience.

Modularisation came in for specific criticism in one post-1992 institution in that it contributed to fragmentation of courses and dehumanisation of the learning experience, partially because of the minimal contact between teacher and individual student, leading to feelings of isolation. Modularisation was introduced primarily to enable expansion through efficiency (Blackwell and Williamson 1999) and provide flexibility in the academic provision thus widening 'consumer' choice. This indicates that modularisation was introduced for managerial rather than academic or pedagogic reasons, and has been regarded as a major driver for the shift from professional to administrative systems (HEQC 1997). The move to market-oriented systems through policies of consumer rights could, therefore, be seen as a greater threat to professional autonomy than TQA.

What was interesting was the view that student feedback was regarded as potentially undermining professionalism, and was more punishment-centred than performance-enhancing. This suggests that student feedback systems should be reviewed and improved taking on board research findings such as those by Harvey (2001) and Drew (2001).

The external examiner system has been a key, self-regulatory mechanism for ensuring comparability and the maintenance of standards in UK higher education. It is acknowledged that the system has been under strain for some time (see Silver 1994). The findings confirm that, in principle external examiners can provide a valuable service, but the system is in urgent need of review. Both the provision of training and appropriate remuneration for external examiners could be components of such a review.

What is important is an appropriate balance between autonomy and accountability. The research findings suggest that systems should be introduced which incorporate self-regulation, together with a minimal level of external monitoring to ensure that the internal controls are practised effectively (see Friedson 1994).

8.4 Collegiality and Leadership

As some writers have pointed out, during the transition from an elitist to a mass higher education system collegial forms of governance have given way to more managerialist and administrative systems (Tapper and Palfreyman 1998, Trow 1994). Nevertheless, within particular layers or segments of an institution, collegiality may continue to thrive in spite of the formal institutional rules (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998).

The study indicates that universities have introduced more bureaucratic and regulatory systems in response to government policies, increasing student numbers and pressures on funding. Communication difficulties have developed as institutions became larger and more complex. In such circumstances, the departments studied felt more isolated and marginalised, whilst at the same time experiencing information overload. Senior academic staff were still involved in the decision-making process, but institutions were increasingly perceived as being less collegial. In fact respondents appeared more critical of their institutional managers than they were of the Government. The view was that senior academics had 'gone native' when promoted to managerial roles i.e. they became more like administrators than their academic peers.

There was evidence, however, of departmental differences in morale between academic staff within the same institution, and pockets of collegiality were in evidence. In the smaller groupings, e.g. of a group/division or small department, there was often a high degree of motivation, involvement and collaboration. In one of the Schools, there was also significant optimism resulting from the arrival of a new Head of School. Hence it is not only institutional management and leadership, but also leadership and working practices at the departmental and group/division level that have a major impact on staff morale, and thus affect the teaching and learning environment.

Knight and Trowler (2000) reported similar findings, and stated that improving teaching involves developing systems of work relations and cultures most significantly at the departmental level. Departmental heads can, thus, mitigate some of the effects of the changes that cause concern amongst academics, and can promote the improvement of teaching and learning practices and outcomes. Gibbs and Coffey (2001) reported that training for teaching was particularly important for academics in the absence of supportive departments. Knight and Trowler concluded that 'appropriate leadership education for departmental chairs and heads is a key to teaching improvement' and recommended new approaches to training that focused on facilitating collaboration (Knight and Trowler 2000:69).

During the study, it was observed that younger staff for the most part appeared motivated and enthusiastic. They seemed more flexible, less threatened by the pace of change, and more positive about their prospects. As Henkel concluded, younger members of the profession appeared to be more realistic than many of their older colleagues about the world in which they had to operate (Henkel 2000;234). Academic staff who had recent experience of industry or commerce also frequently regarded academia as being a preferable working environment. Those who complained of degradation in their working conditions and were perceived to be most demoralised, however, were frequently those in mid-career and beyond, and who had not progressed to more senior positions. Although the reasons were not explored directly, it is possible that these members of staff might have felt undervalued, 'stuck

in a rut', and threatened by an increasingly alien environment that demanded a high degree of flexibility and innovation.

Participants who were in a management role, however, tended to be more motivated, perhaps because they perceived that they had greater control or involvement in the decision-making process and had reached an acceptable level in their careers. They often acknowledged the problems facing higher education in general and their institutions in particular, but were usually less emotive and disillusioned. These departmental heads, with the benefit of management and leadership training, particularly in human resource management, could contribute significantly to the development of collaboration and collegiality, and the improvement of teaching and learning at the departmental or group level.

8.5 Higher Education in Crisis

There are frequent complaints about the crisis in British higher education, which is perceived to have resulted predominantly from successive government policy for massive expansion of university education, without providing the money to pay for it. The United Kingdom spends less than 1per cent of GDP on higher education, significantly less that many of our economic competitors (DES 2003). The Government acknowledges that funding per student fell by 36 per cent between 1989 and 1997 (DES 2003) whereas Dearing (1997) expressed concern that should the planned further reduction in unit funding be implemented, it would have been halved in 25 years. Less money per student means less time per student as student:staff ratios have also doubled. There are currently just over 40 per cent of the under-30 population in higher education, and the target is 50 per cent by 2010. Within universities, therefore, an atmosphere of financial crisis is endemic.

Academic salaries have been squeezed and it will be difficult to replace staff with people of equal ability when they retire. An academic is likely not only to earn less than his/her graduating students, but also have significantly poorer career prospects. As the study indicated, career prospects were perceived as being poor in the institutions studied. According to an Institute of Employment Studies report, full-time

higher education workers particularly in the associate professional, professional and managerial occupational groups, receive lower levels of pay than people in similar occupations in the rest of the economy (Magin and Perryman 2002). Indeed, the crisis extends throughout the public sector where stress and too much bureaucracy were reported to contribute to the sector's increasing staff shortages (Audit Commission 2002). The brightest students will, thus, increasingly be deterred from considering an academic career. 'If bright students can no longer be taught by even brighter tutors, the intellectual journey that is such a fundamental part of university life will be undermined' (Cavendish 2002:6-7). The potential reduction of our universities to a state of mediocrity can only, ultimately, have a detrimental effect on the United Kingdom's competitive position in knowledge generation and innovation.

The government acknowledges that there is a funding gap and are currently considering how this can be bridged. Hence there are discussions about the possibility of introducing top-up fees or a graduate tax. The former is likely to impinge on government's widening access policy, since poorer students are more averse to taking out loans. There are questions, however, as to how much extra funding would reach the universities, if a graduate tax were introduced. The Higher Education Bill setting out Government's proposals for student top-up fees, passed its Third Reading on 31 March 2004.

A corresponding issue is whether the policy to increase higher education uptake is valid or necessary. There is evidence that a growing proportion of jobs are graduate only (CBI 2002) though the question arises as to whether some of these jobs actually do need graduate level qualifications. According to a recent CSU (Careers Services Unit) analysis of data from the Government's Labour Force survey, graduates across all occupations have on average over 50 per cent higher earnings than non-graduates, whilst the unemployment rate for graduates is lower. Results from an annual study from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) suggests that UK graduates earn the highest rate of return compared to their counterparts in other OECD countries. The report highlighted that the rate of return for a degree, taking all factors that had a negative impact into account, was higher than the real interest rates in all countries (OECD 2002). Hence there are very real

benefits to obtaining a university degree. The returns associated with degree level qualifications do, however, vary substantially according to the type of institution attended and the subject studied; the graduates from 'elite' universities earning more than those from other institutions (CIHE 2002).

Computer Science was the most popular degree choice for 2002 students, as in 2001, according to provisional figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS 2002). Despite this, according to E-skills UK, less than one in five people who chose to study Computer Science at university, joined the IT workforce, whilst specific skills shortages were noted indicating a need to develop and update courses to reflect the changing needs of employers. Business and Management Studies followed closely behind Computer Science in popularity, whilst Management Consultant was voted the most desired profession according to a poll of over 3000 workers by reed.co.uk. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was a high demand for places in the institutions studied, where the reported working student:staff ratio in, for example, Computer Science approached 30:1 rather than the formal institutional targets which were closer to 20:1. In order to attract extra funding, universities feel obliged to admit as many suitably qualified overseas students as possible, and this only serves to put extra pressure on student:staff ratios and consequently on academic workload.

Student demand for degrees in specific subject disciplines such as Computer Science varies according to the employment prospects on graduation. At a time when there are buoyant employment opportunities for graduates, there are frequently corresponding difficulties in recruiting academic staff, and this puts additional pressure on student:staff ratios. The government recognises that there are recruitment difficulties particularly in computing/IT and business-related subjects amongst others, and identifies challenges internal to higher education as including 'to recruit, retain and reward the calibre of academic staff needed to sustain and improve both teaching and research' (DES 2003:1.13).

The White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DES 2003) sets out government's proposals not only for student finance and access but also for research, knowledge

exchange, teaching and learning and the expansion of higher education. With respect to teaching and learning, the government acknowledges that high quality teaching should be recognised and rewarded and identifies new money not only for pay modernisation but also for improvements in teaching quality, 'conditional on higher education institutions having human resource strategies that explicitly value teaching and reward and promote good teachers' (DES 2003:46). The government appears to have conceded that the sector does need substantial resources in order to maintain quality higher education.

8.6 Reflections on Institutional Review

The new external review method will not be fully operational until 2005, though reviews have been taking place in 2003/2004. The academics in the study will, therefore, have had little, if any, experience of the revised system currently, particularly in view of the fact that Discipline Audit Trails (DATs) are implemented on a selective basis during each Institutional Review. They may have had some involvement, however, in the consultations on benchmark standards or the preparation of programme specifications. They could also have had some experience of internal reviews that had been re-designed to accommodate QAA's requirements. It is likely, however, that only senior departmental staff have had such involvements. Those departments that were not visited under TQA would have been reviewed under the Subject Review methodology. It is possible that the departments that were visited under TQA but were rated 'satisfactory' could also have been either reviewed under the Subject Review methodology or have experienced a developmental discipline-level engagement. Most of the interviewees from the original study would now, therefore, have a clearer idea of what was required in the process of external review, than they did when interviewed.

Had the interviews taken place today, however, rather than over five years ago it is likely that the responses, though better informed, would have been much the same. At the time, TQA was seen as a bureaucratic paper-chase, which encouraged a game-playing approach, a limited level of compliance with the process, extra work and anxiety, and a perception of control. It was also felt to have the tendency to

standardise the creativity out of teaching, and whilst have some beneficial effects in terms of potentially raising the profile of teaching, the improvement of administrative processes and the consistency of the student experience, it was of little direct benefit to teaching and learning. These criticisms could also be levelled at the new review process, which is even more prescriptive and bureaucratic than TQA. On the other hand, the reduction in the number of subject level reviews and the elimination of direct evaluation of the teaching of individual academics would probably be a welcome aspect of the new process.

It is possible that respondents would also report that external intervention had facilitated, rather than promoted, changes they perceived as beneficial. In particular, the provision of staff development for teaching and learning would probably have progressed significantly over the last five years, and it is likely that all new staff would now be required to undergo initial training for teaching, if they did not already have a teaching qualification. There might also be some, though probably limited, progress with respect to career development for teaching. In addition, some accommodation would have taken place as academics become resigned to the process of external monitoring especially if they see the emphasis on the review to be developmental rather than judgemental, and they can make use of a good review in their promotional materials. As older academics retire the younger ones taking their places, being accustomed to the principle of accountability, are often less resistant to external quality monitoring. A gradual change in culture, thus, takes place.

8.7 The Study's Contribution to the Research Literature

This study contributes to the debate on quality assurance in higher education and, in particular, presents findings of systematic research into the views of academics on the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) process itself. Systematic research of this nature, and in this area, appeared to be lacking in the literature at the time. TQA operated only between February 1993 and June 1995. The study, therefore, provides an insight into academics' views on the first comprehensive attempt to assure the quality of teaching in higher education in the UK. The research, thus, contributes to the literature in terms of providing a sociological portrait of the academic teaching

profession, albeit restricted to the chosen subject disciplines. Whereas Halsey and Trow (1971), for example, surveyed universities following the publication of the Robbins (1963) recommendations for university expansion, this research provides a smaller, though in depth, study of universities following the introduction of the first external monitoring system for teaching.

Insights are also provided into disciplinary cultures that are not usually chosen for research projects since they are not regarded as 'traditional' university subject disciplines. For instance, Becher (1989) did not include either in his sample of 12 disciplines for his mapping of 'tribes' and corresponding 'territories', and concentrated on research cultures, rather than exploring the academic's role as teacher. Henkel (2000) also excluded Business Studies and Computer Science from the 7 'traditional' disciplines chosen for her study on how far policy change permeated academic identities, though she did include the examination of teaching identities in the post-TQA era. The findings presented here, therefore, also make some contribution to furthering the work on academic teaching identities.

The research also contributes in the area of professionalism of university teaching. Whereas the literature concentrated on perceived deprofessionalisation effects of government policy such as external quality monitoring, the study concludes that the participants felt, in the main, that TQA could, in fact, enhance rather than erode teaching professionalism. Such conclusions were based predominantly on the view that TQA could not only assist them in the maintenance of academic standards, but also raise the profile of teaching, and, thus, encourage the development of accredited training and development, and recognition of, and rewards for, university teaching.

Finally the study feeds indirectly into the literature on leadership and management of universities and the perceived need for training for those in or destined for management roles, particularly in the area of human resource management. Insights are also provided into academics' responses to change (see e.g. Cuthbert 1996) in the late twentieth century. Echoing some of the findings of the Carnegie Surveys (Boyer et al 1994, Altbach 1997), the research indicates that academics were under

significant pressures in times of rapid change, but were reflecting and modernising whilst attempting to retain their professional values and community.

8.9 Summary

The aim of this phenomenologically-based study was to establish from the perspective of the academic what impact the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) had had on teaching in higher education, with particular reference to its effects on teaching quality and implications for academic professionalism.

The general perception of the interviewees with respect to teaching in higher education was that there was a lack of:

- value and recognition of university teaching
- career prospects for teachers in higher education
- time available to do a good job at teaching
- opportunities to improve teaching e.g. training and development

In principle and contrary to much of the research literature, the majority of interviewees welcomed an external quality monitoring system since they felt that university teaching was significantly undervalued particularly in relation to research. Despite this TQA was perceived as not directly benefiting teaching and learning in higher education. Echoing the literature, the academics believed that the methodology was inappropriate in that it was too bureaucratic and encouraged gamesmanship rather than real long-term improvements.

The respondents did believe that there were indirect benefits of TQA including instigating the improvement of administrative systems and helping them to demonstrate that they were effective in maintaining standards. TQA was also perceived as being responsible for raising the profile of teaching, thus promoting the recognition of teaching excellence. The primary benefit was, thus, the potential enhancement of teaching professionalism, including the encouragement of accredited training, and rewards for excellence in university teaching. This was in contrast to the

literature, which focused more on the perceived deprofessionalisation effects of government policies including quality monitoring.

Academic freedom was not eroded by TQA but some academics felt it might have an impact on institutional autonomy. This was not regarded as a particularly detrimental effect in some cases, indicating a certain lack of trust in their institutional managers. The introduction of increasingly managerialist and administrative systems in response to government policies, increasing student numbers and pressures on funding were perceived to have led to a reduction in collegial forms of governance. Pockets of collegiality in some smaller groupings at departmental level were, however, in evidence. This pointed to the value of good management and leadership at all levels of the institution, in the improvement of university teaching.

A gradual change in culture was likely to occur in universities as older staff retired and were replaced by younger ones who were acquainted with quality monitoring at the start of their careers. A process of accommodation was also in evidence. The new quality assurance procedure, though more prescriptive and bureaucratic than TQA, could be more acceptable particularly if, as proposed, it operated with a light-touch and did not directly evaluate teaching performance.

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